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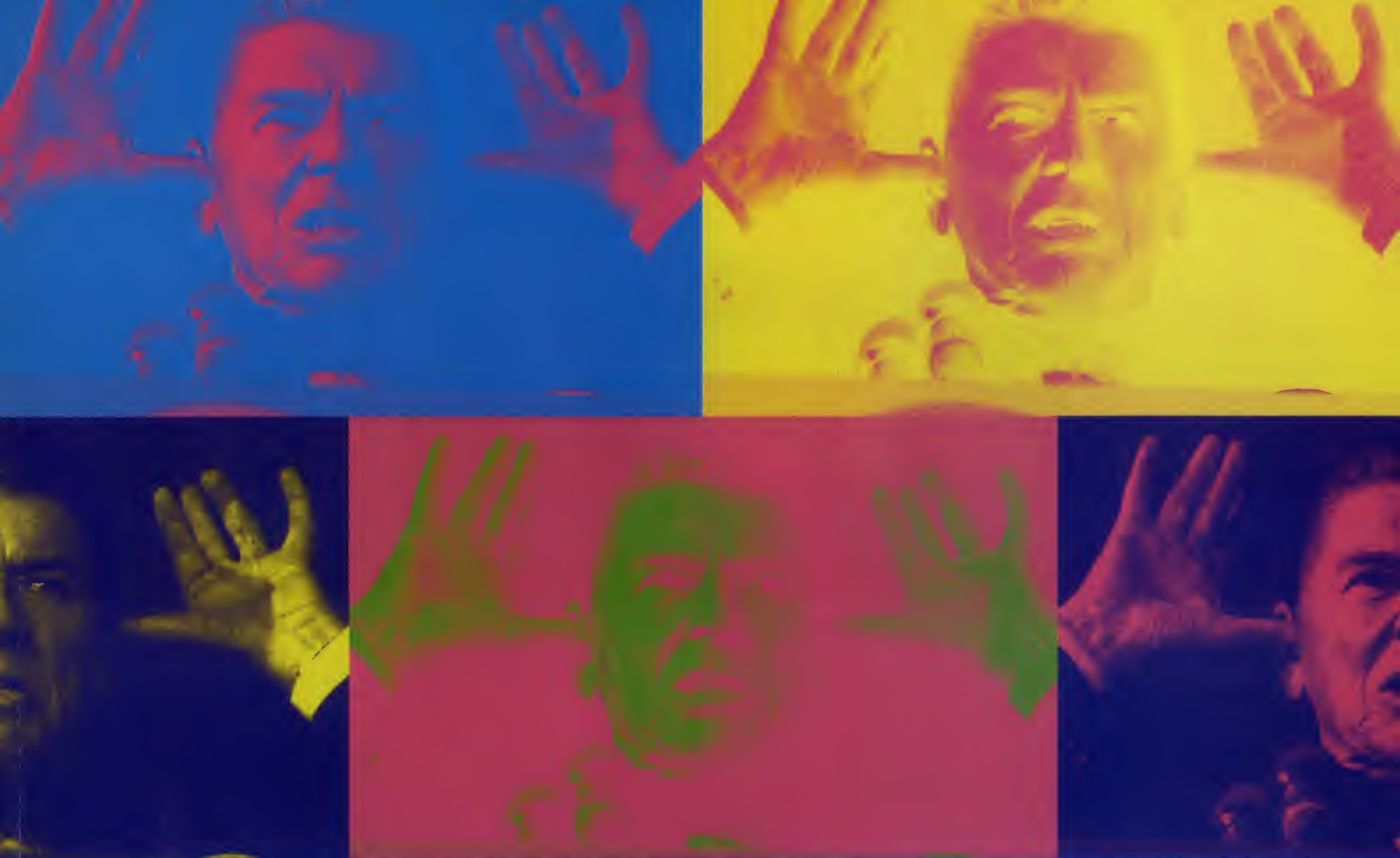


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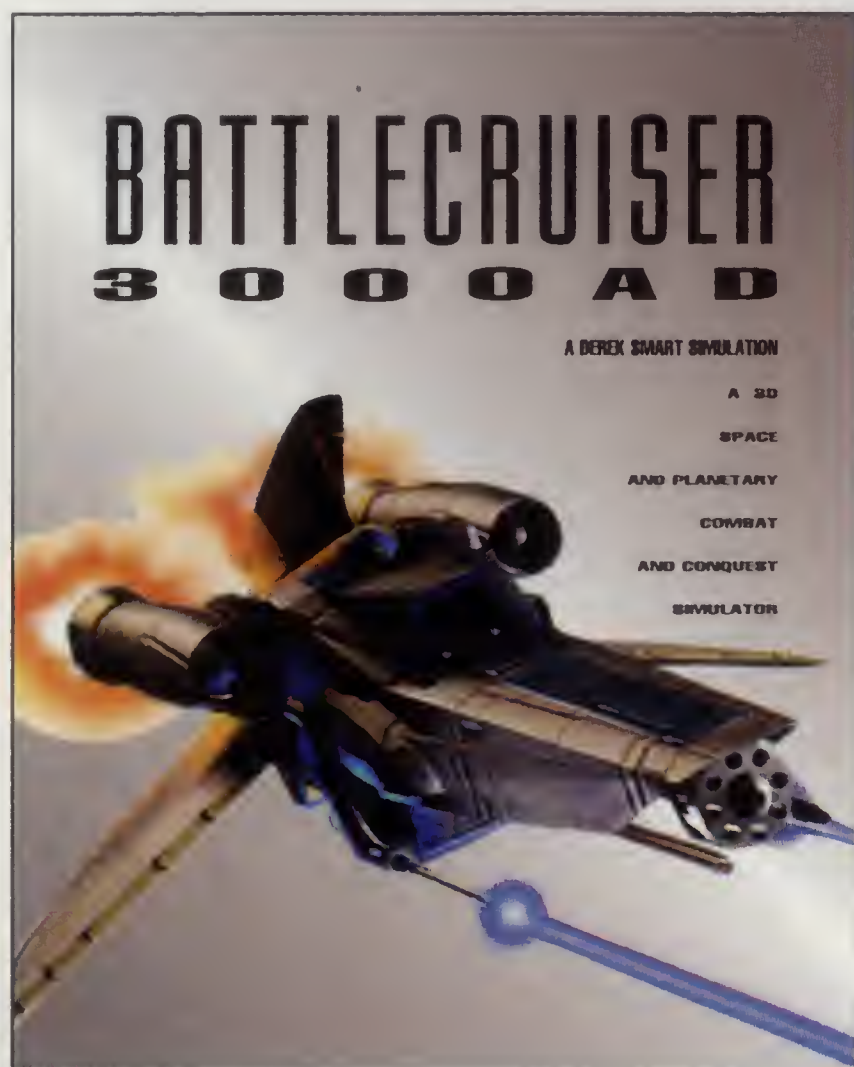


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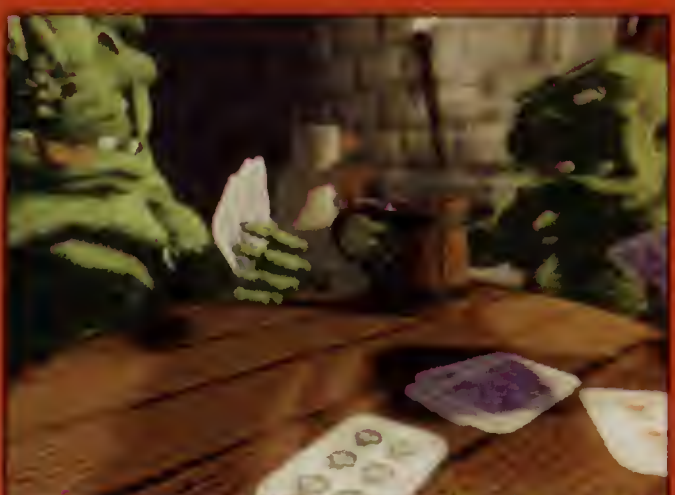
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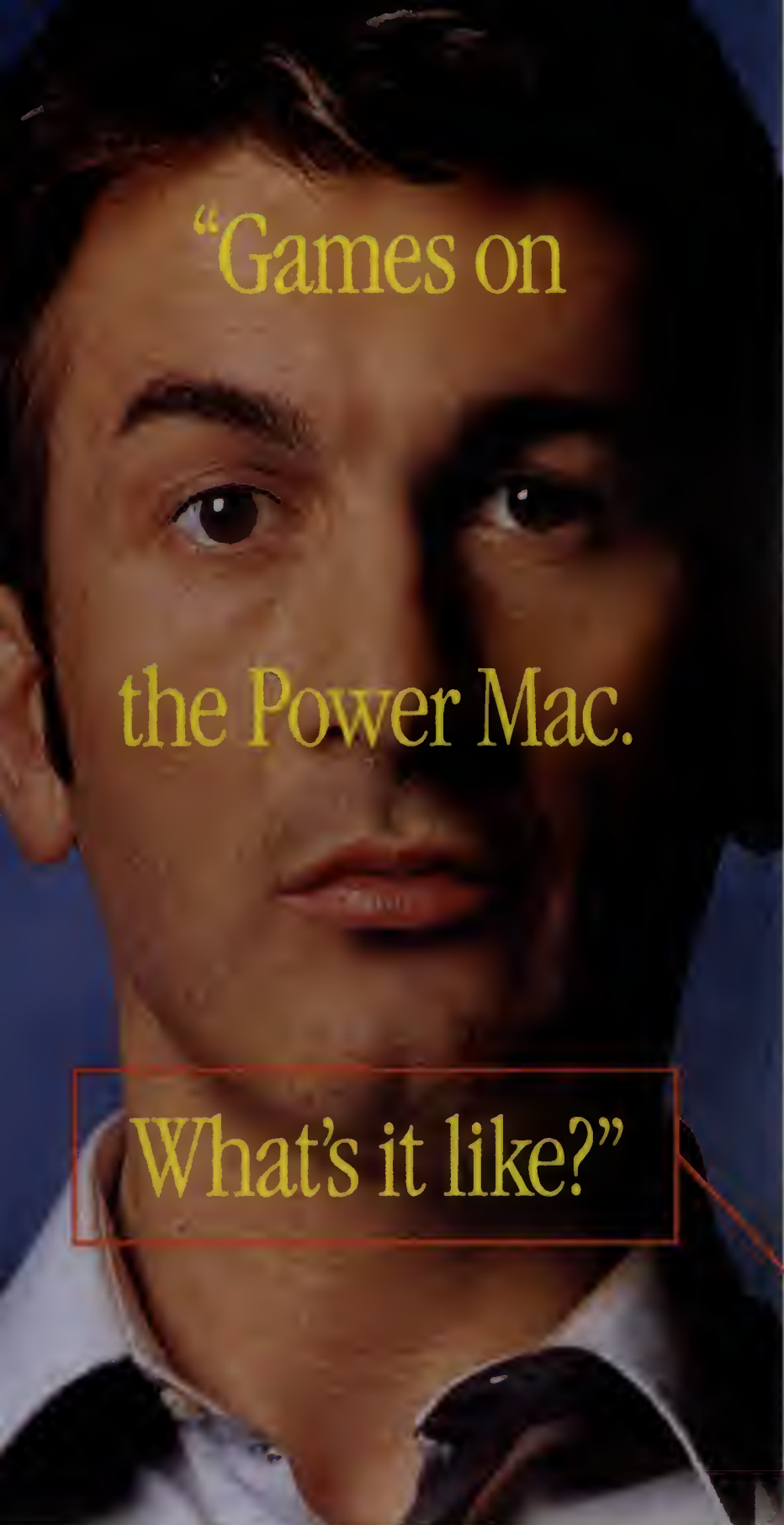
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On-line's breaking out all over

With everyone and their sister signing up for an internet or on-line account of some sort these days, the push for multi-player gaming's gone into full swing. Strange thing. Computer gaming began – in part – because people (particularly board gamers) couldn't find enough folks around to get together for sustained gameplay. Voila – the Silicon Companion. Only problem is, SC isn't anywhere near as fun to be around, and despite concerted efforts hasn't proven to be as intelligent a gaming opponent as was hoped for. It doesn't need appetizers and it doesn't make a mess, but then again even though it sits day and night at home with you, it's proven pretty fussy about complying with installation of the latest game (voila – Windows 95; or so we're promised). So here we are again, after ten years of trying, looking for another way to game with other people who can't (or won't) leave home.

Is this a good thing? While some people in the industry claim "there will never be good enough AI in computer gaming to produce a credible opponent," I feel otherwise. Most game designers haven't even begun to tap into anything truly sophisticated in the AI dept.; those few designs that have done so have actually proven to be pretty successful sellers. Relying on human opponents to make up for the lack of sufficient quality in the computer opponent – as has been pointed out elsewhere, eloquently and amply – risks letting designers completely off the hook in this design area. Without the need to experiment with designing a computer opponent, any Jim or Bill could jump in and start claiming the role of game designer/producer. All you're left to worry about (well, I exaggerate slightly) is the interface. And Microsoft's Foundation Classes will take care of most of that for you, too (again, slight exaggeration). The point being, take away the goal of producing interesting responses generated by the computer to human input, and you've taken away a lot of the substance of a good game design.

Oh, there are certain genres where that's not as much of an issue – first-person shooters, for instance. And certainly there will be games designed which feature a combination of human players and good computer opponents, the ultimate ideal. But the pressure behind the push for on-line gaming is away from exploration of computer AI design, which is only a good thing if money is the overriding issue (games are cheaper if you don't have to worry about designing a computer opponent).

Lots of huge corporations have gone into backing people hooking up via modem, for various purposes. It's an area in technological development where the profits are still immensely high, at a time when the returns on further hardware and software design investment are getting slimmer and slimmer (both hardware and software have, in many ways, reached the point where they're more than sufficient for most of the things most people would need to do with a computer, or computer-related piece of equipment). The ratio of actual utility to extensive hype is currently quite extreme – many people otherwise uninformed about computer-related technologies seem easily convinced that "getting online" will make significant changes in their lives (you've seen the ads, the remarkable thing is that many of you believe them). Other than making it possible to live in a small, dark box, relying all the while on this whiz-bang thingamajiggie to give you the chance to fulfill all your physical and emotional needs without having to move, think or actually communicate directly with another human being, I can't imagine what *useful* changes such technology could provide. Sure, zealots in Idaho could virtually attend the Monet exhibit in Chicago without having to buy a plane ticket or hotel room, but where's the experience in that? Step out the door and have some real fun instead.

In gaming terms, the biggest achievement I personally could hope for would be the transfer of all the whining and bickering and flaming energy away from discussion groups and towards multi-player bonk festivals. On-line discussions these days are an even bigger waste of time than they used to be – they consist for the most part of variations on the theme, "mine is bigger than yours." Imagine all that energy funneled off into the "I've got the Biggest Gun" first-person multi-player 3D shooter virtual park, and the room it would leave over for the remaining 300 people on the planet capable of engaging in real conversation!

Oh well – it's not all that bad. There is lots of fascinating information, discussion, engagement and involvement out there in the on-line world, and like anything else, as long as it's "as well as" rather than "instead of," it's all to the good. Sure, people will probably go gaga over it for awhile, lose all perspective on the Other Fun Things There Are to Do with Your Life That Don't Involve a Computer for awhile, regain it and then fit on-line involvement into the course of their daily lives in balance with everything else. So far, though, I don't see the world coming together any better than it did sixty years ago as a result of this technology – and at a time when the peace and privacy of every citizen on the planet is getting more and more subjected to massive and violent invasion at both the macro and micro levels, going off on your own and doing your own thing is looking more attractive than it's ever been. Getting hooked up won't help if you're lonely, it won't help if you need some time to yourself, it won't help if you don't already know how to conduct a search for in-depth information on a favored topic (that takes skill, skill you can learn with or without a computer), it won't help if you don't already know what you're looking for. It's another tool, and for those who know how to use it reasonably, it's an amazing one. But hang off a bit on the assumption that it will bring world peace – and solve the limitations in the design of current computer gaming opponents.

◆ Steve Wartofsky, Editor

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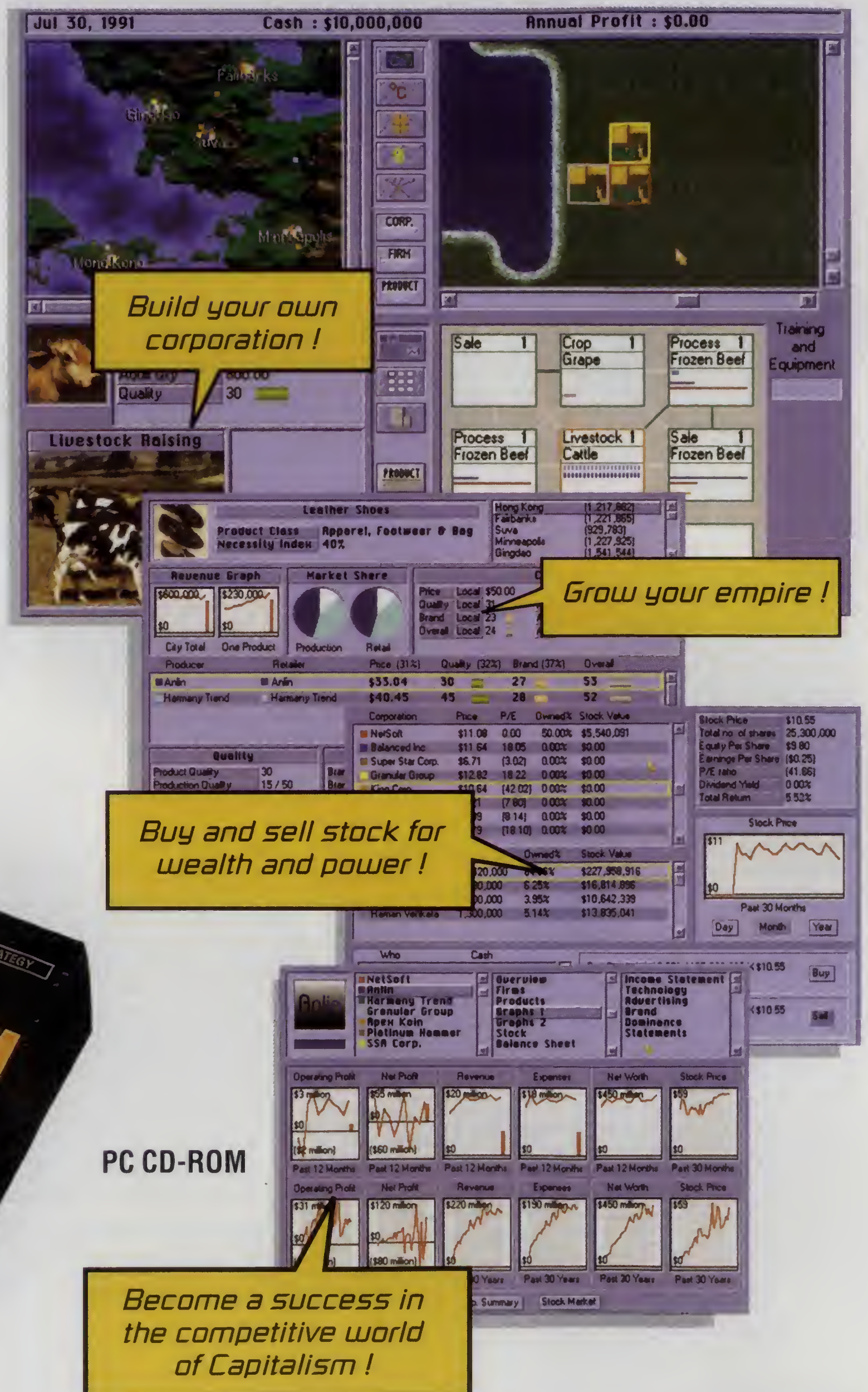
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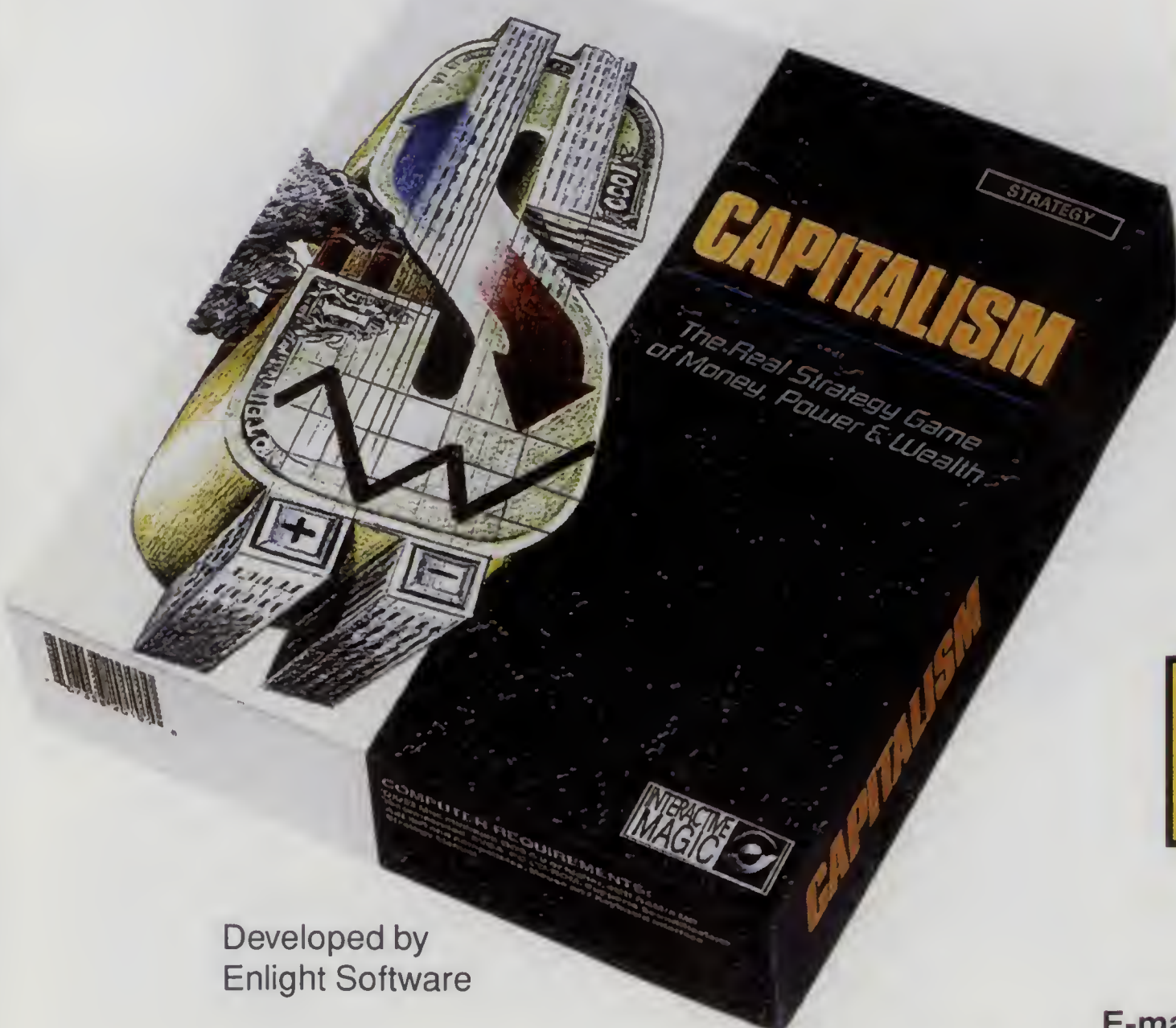
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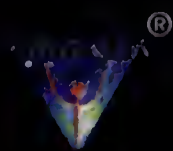
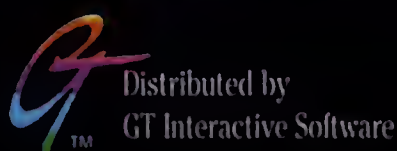
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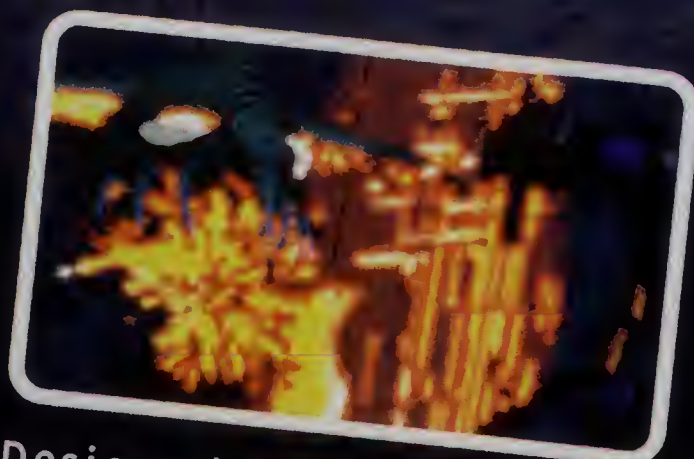
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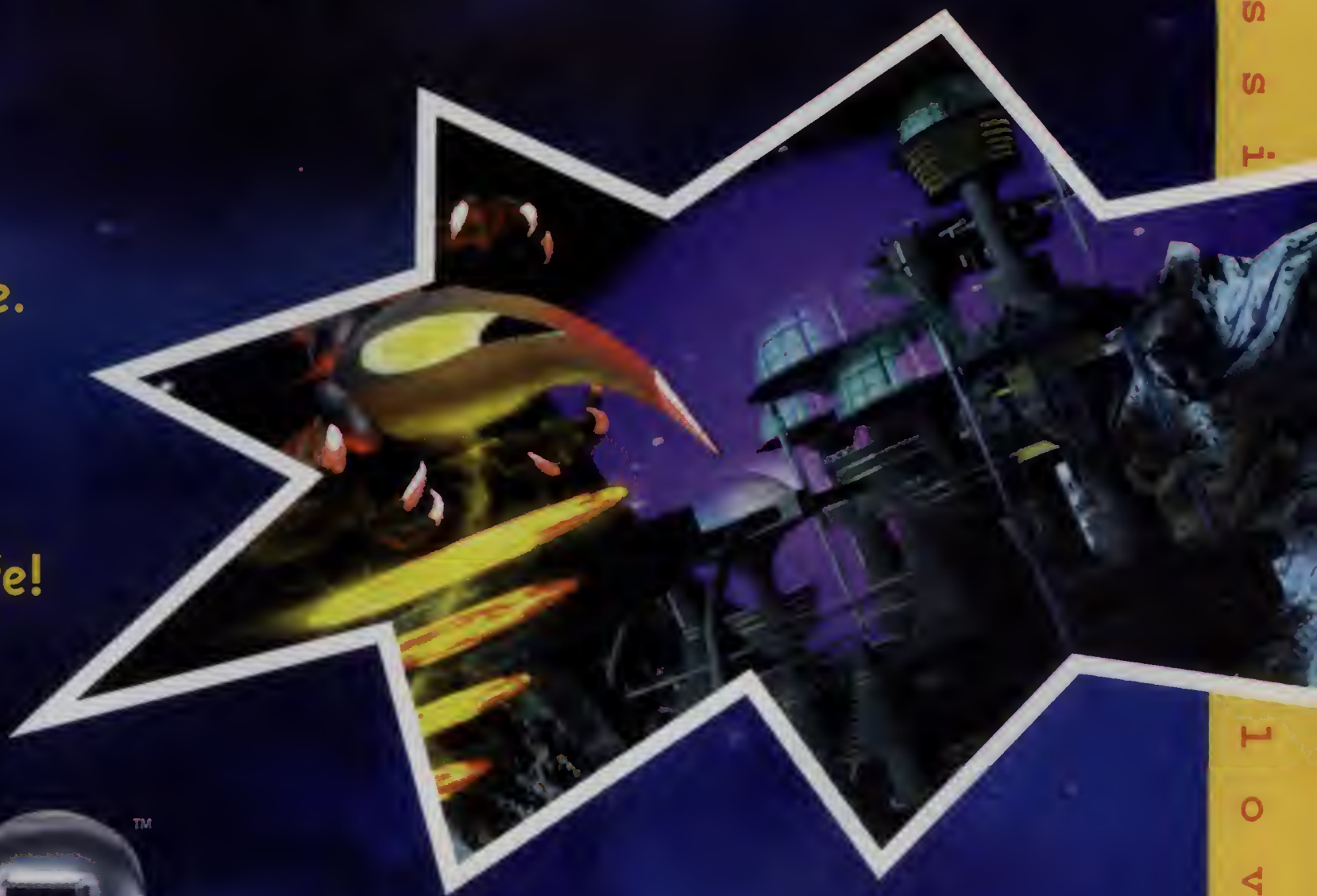
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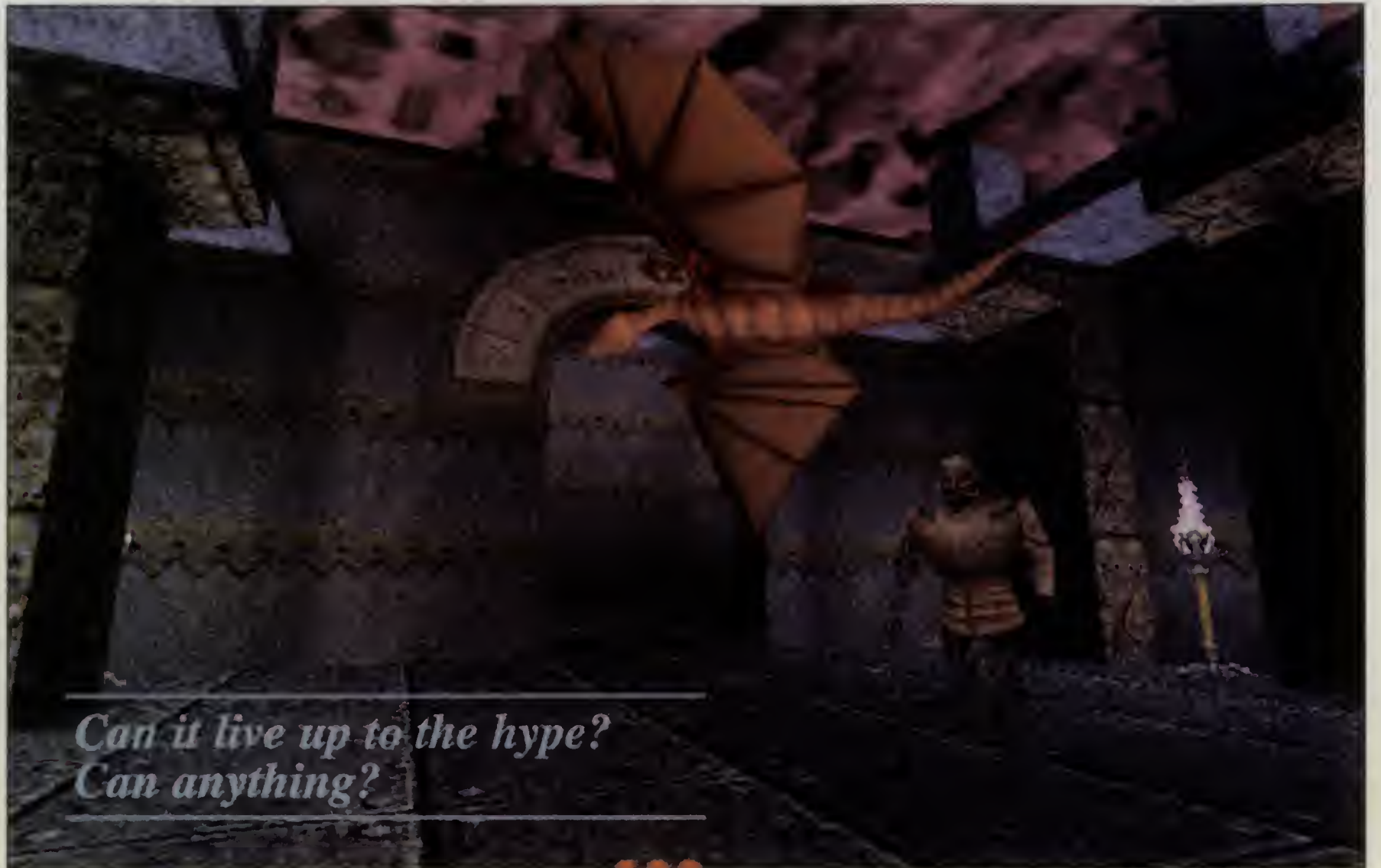
Quake, rattle and roll

id finally release pictures of their Doom-killer Quake. So what's the big deal?

We'll know sometime this year as *id Software* bring you their latest shareware offering **Quake**. *id* have the unenviable task of one-upping their own instant classic **Doom** and **Quake** is that game. While they remain tight-lipped about any details (with the usual "when it's ready" serving as the official release date), the various *id*-sters have been divulging a bit of information on the Internet and other on-line services. More than one *id* employee has stated that **Quake** will be an even greater leap in technology than **Doom** was from **Wolfenstein 3D**.

Which you may not be buying. You're probably looking at these pictures and saying to yourself, "Y'know, it looks like **Doom** only a *bit* better. So what's the big deal?" Well, we'll see. Besides, many games looked better than **Doom** but few played better. Also, these pictures may very well be red-herrings and the final game will be superior to these pictures.

One thing that is known about the visuals is that variable resolutions will be supported, and there could also be support for 24-bit color. A graphical touch that *id* are especially proud of is their dynamic lighting, which provides realistic shadowing and many interesting effects. Unfortunately it looks like everyone will be doing that in their latest 3D games, including *Bullfrog* with **Magic Carpet 2** and **Dungeon Keeper** and



Mindscape with **Warhammer 40K**. **Quake** will be using texture-mapped polygons for the character graphics instead of the bitmaps that **Doom** used, which will allow the characters to have more fluid animation.

Quake is currently being optimized for network play (LAN and Internet), with the ultimate goal being a client/server version where anyone will theoretically be able to setup **Quake** servers that any number of people will be able to log into and engage in some mass genocide (though the rumors have it that 20 simultaneous users will be

the maximum for current servers – it's a server speed limit, not a **Quake** limit). What it sounds like they're trying to achieve is perhaps the ultimate graphic MUD (multi-user dungeon), minus any role-playing.

Do you want to know about the plot? Yeah, right. Like anyone cares. It's about a Thor-like being who carries around a hammer and bashes the hell out of everyone. We're sure someone already has the movie rights.

If *id* decide to give out any information on the game we'll be sure to bring it to you.

Fantasy General



One thing that you can say about *SSI*: they know a good thing when they see it! First there was the phenomenon which is **Panzer General**, and this holiday season we should see its sequel **Allied General** on the shelves. Following that sometime in the new year will be the next general: **Fantasy General**.

Fantasy General basically takes the battle screens out of **Panzer General** and puts them in a fantasy campaign setting. Players have the choice of choosing from four character classes: Paladin, Warrior, Wizard, and Sorceress. Each class has a particular strength. For instance, the Paladin character can cast a Heal spell on all the troops once each battle. Once a class is decided upon, the character starts up his adventure. As he wanders across the campaign map, he'll have both random and preset encounters. Sound like a role playing game? Well, in some ways it seems to be; only the encounters take the form of battles.

A product called **Fantasy General** obviously needs two things: magic and heroes. Sure enough, both will be in the game. There are both magic *users*, who can cast fairly traditional spells during a turn (i.e., fireball) and magic *items*, which give a unit a special ability. As a result of his fame or just good fortune, a player may attract heroes. These affect adjacent troops, improving their morale and fighting

skills, in addition to being powerful units in their own right.

A new feature in this **General** is research. At the beginning of the game, a player can only recruit low-level troops, but by devoting gold to research, he can "raise the bar" of his green troops, so to speak. In addition to mortal troops, a fantasy general can research magic, beastman and mechanical units. Again, all of these will have special attributes.

If you aren't up to a whole campaign (and there are five of them in the game, each based on a different continent), an included battle generator will whip up a quick scenario for you to play. For you multi-player gamers out there, play-by-mail is built in.

Yup, all you fantasy fans who've got a craving for some strategy gaming will want to watch the development of this one. Be sure, we'll have more coverage of **Fantasy General** (and the "it's more than a rumor" **Panzer General II**) as the pieces start falling into place.



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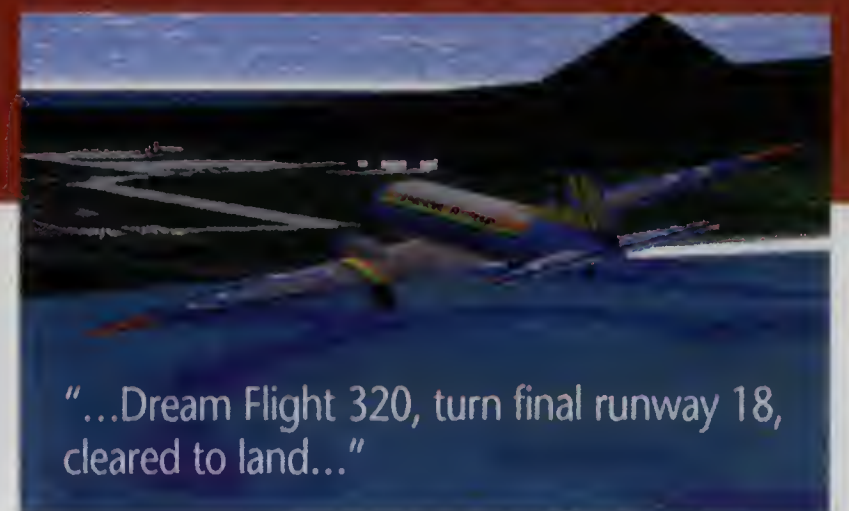
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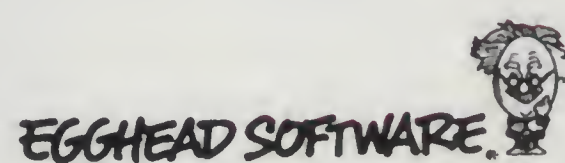


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Reader Service No. 105



Curse of Dragor & Big Red Racing



Domark continues their onslaught of new releases

The folks at Domark have a number of releases on the way in the coming months. Here's a few of them.

Continuing their unending support for the Macintosh platform is **Curse of Dragor**, an adventure game. The land of Xorinth was in peace until the nasty sorcerer Dragor returned from exile. As evil and nasty guys are apt to do, he decides to take control of the land and turns people into various inanimate objects. It will be up to the player to find the people and defeat Dragor, restoring Xorinth to its previous glory.

Dragor utilizes a first-person view and features 15 characters, numerous levels of unrelenting evil and creatures ranging from giant ants and spiders to headless mummies and various Windows 95 users. The graphics are high-resolution and the game will be accelerated for the Power Macintosh.

And now for something completely different. Domark's latest multi-player game is **Big Red Racing**, an arcade racing game for the PC with support for up to six players via an IPX network link and two over a modem. The game will include 12 different vehicles and 15 tracks. Some of the vehicles include jeeps, tanks, hover crafts (hmm, **Hi-Octane** anyone?), cop cars and snow mobiles. The game will also support VR helmets and add-ons.

Also down the road will be **Terracide**, the game formerly known as **Berzerker**, and is the next in Domark's "Sci-Sim" series of games.

Interplay's title wave of hits

What, you mean we might actually see Stonekeep?



"It's been hell," is how Brian Fargo, the CEO of Interplay, described the development of **Stonekeep**, the eternally delayed CRPG to be released on November 8th, 1995. With a design that started in 1987 and production that commenced in 1991, Fargo still insists it was worth it because "some of the things you get from a project that lasts this long, other than a lot of debt, is depth, polish and hopefully a classic."

As Interplay are one of the only privately-held companies left (with major investment from MCA), their rise to the top three of game publishers is quite a surprise, especially when you consider many of their competitors got there through mergers and acquisitions.

That's not to say they're not open to new partners. MCA gives them licenses such as *Casper*, *Star Trek* (look for **Star Fleet Academy** in 1996) and *Waterworld*. Early 1996 will see an action and strategy game based on the latter, with the strategy game, called **Waterworld: The Quest for Dryland**, sounding the most interesting. Vince De Nardo (*Castles, Conquest of the New World*) is producing the product, and *Intelligent Games* (*USS Ticonderoga*) are handling the design. De Nardo describes the game as "Warcraft meets *Wing Commander III*," which means the mission setups for this *Syndicate*-style action/strategy game will feature full-motion video, some of it taken from *Kevin's Gate* itself.

Later this year we'll see Interplay's partnership with TSR bear its first fruit with **Dragon Dice** and **Descent to Undermountain: The Flame Sword of Hoth**. **Dragon Dice** is an intriguing looking dice game (duh!) which appears to have much in common with **Magic: The Gathering**. **Undermountain** is an action role-playing game that would appear to be Interplay's

Heretic. It's based on the **Descent** engine; in addition to running around Interplay promise there will be flying spells, just so you can get that unique **Descent**-style motion sickness.

Interplay also announced they have the PC CD-ROM rights to products from Namco, and when you look at Gremlin's gorgeous-looking **Fatal Racing** (ooh, an arcade-style racing game with jumps and such... Yeah!) and the presence of a **Ridge Racer** coin-op at the press conference, well, we can hope that we've lost the last reason to own a PlayStation. Could a PC version of **Tekken** be somewhere down the road, too?

Obviously the launching most important to Interplay was their announcement of their VR Sports line of sports games. Obviously patterned after Electronic Arts' EA Sports division, the first title we'll see is **VR Baseball '96**. All of the titles will feature full 3D graphics, allowing complete freedom of movement for both players and for camera placement. Also nearing completion is **VR Soccer '96**, being handled by Gremlin. Running in SVGA on a PC, this should give incredible competition to EA Sports' upcoming **FIFA Soccer '96**. Also far along is **VR Golf '96**, also from Gremlin. Down the road expect **VR Pool '96** (which is *Virtual Pool*'s sequel), **VR Basketball '96**, **VR Football '96**, and **VR Hockey '96**. Expect all of the releases to trickle out near the start of each of their respective regular seasons.

The funniest part of the press conference announcing all of these products was when marketing said with a completely straight face that VR Sports were going to be the "alternative" sports brand, appealing to those "Generation X" kids into "hardcore and extreme" sports and who consider themselves "hip." Yow, can't wait.

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Interactive Magic



The upcoming F-16 Fighting Falcon (preliminary artwork)



Star Rangers, building on the legacy of the old Atari 800 classic Star Raiders

An early general returns to the sim/strategy battlefield

Newcomers to computer gaming may not realize that "Wild" Bill Stealey was one of the founders of *MicroProse*. Mind you, back when this was going on, 64K was thought of as an almost infinite amount of RAM, and the 6502 processor was king. *MicroProse* was one of the companies which defined computer gaming back then.

Now Wild Bill is at it again. His new company, *Interactive Magic*, is about to cause a stir by in some ways returning to those early days. *Interactive Magic* is a company with a narrow focus: simulators and strategy games. Stealey's attitude is that no one can do everything right, so he is guiding his start-up towards being a dominating force in these two genres.

Stealey's design philosophy seems to encompass three major issues. First, every strategy game should have some action, and every simulation should have some strategy. Second, every one of his games should offer something to the neophyte gamer as well as to the jaded old pro. And third, in the near future multi-player gaming will grow to become a major sector of the market.

As we write this, *I-Magic's* first product, **Apache**, has just hit the shelves. *I-Magic* has worked with *Digital Integration* to produce what is one of the best helicopter simulations we've seen. The game includes both an arcade flight model (with an invincible mode for beginners) for when you just feel the need to blast the bejeesus out of something, and a realistic flight model for when you're in the mood for some serious sim-combat.

Next up should be **Exploration**, developed by *Software 2000*. **Exploration** has, in fact, been delayed for a few months, due to some minor but persistent bugs. That's another part of the *I-Magic* business plan: release no game before it's time. Everyone who has paid to be a beta tester (i.e., bought a game only to find it riddled with bugs) will appreciate this outlook.

Star Rangers is planned for this fall. This is *Interactive Magic's* first in-house product. It combines space shooter action with a strategic mission-planning element. You greybeards out there may remember playing **Star Raiders** on the Atari 8-bit machines. **Star Raiders** was the game that pulled Stealey (among many others, this writer included) into computer gaming. In some respects, **Star Rangers** is a 90's update to this very cool classic game. You have the same dilemma of what base to protect when, and how the heck you're going to get back to refuel before those enemy transports get out of range.

Capitalism, by *Enlight Software*, may be *I-Magic's* dark horse. This is a business simulation that's actually <gasp!> fun to play. There's a demo on this month's CD (and out there on the nets) and we urge you to give it a try, even if you've been bored to tears by business sims in the past. One of the nice things about **Capitalism** is that you can attack it in small pieces. For a complete rundown on the game, look at the feature on page 40.

The big news when we visited *Interactive Magic* was *Dagger Interactive Technologies, Ltd's* **Dynasties** (a working title which will

almost certainly change). Let's get this right out in the open. The game is somewhat reminiscent of **Civilization**. Your job is to guide a tribe of followers from their hunter-gatherer beginnings to the modern age. The kicker here is that the game runs in accelerated real-time (er, isn't that an oxymoron?) and is based on a completely 3D world. You'll be able to approach your world from a first person perspective, and wander about looking for the perfect place to settle, or to build that new school. In fact, in the difficult mode of play, you'll only be able to approach the world in 3D until you develop the technologies needed to get you off the surface and look down. We'll have more extensive coverage of this title soon.

Looking down the road a bit, *I-Magic* is planning 6-8 titles for next year, though the only one they'll talk about on the record is an **F-16 Fighting Falcon** (working title) simulator from *Digital Integration*, and they're not saying much about that! Suffice it to say that fans of the old *MicroProse* should be quite pleased by some of the projects in the works. This should come as no surprise, since the same hand is guiding this new company.

At a time when many of the old guard are faltering, bleeding red ink or merging into megacompanies with no soul, *Interactive Magic* is a bastion of hope for those of us who go gaga over sims and strategy games with great play value. We look forward to seeing what Wild Bill has up his sleeve.

For more on **Star Rangers**, keep reading... (hand icon)

CARPE DIEM

(Seize this game)

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FIRST LOOK



Star Rangers

Interactive Magic's first in-house design is **Star Rangers**, a game that unabashedly pays homage to the classic **Star Raiders**. At the surface, **Star Rangers** is a space flight "sim." In it, you step into the shoes of a Star Ranger, a sort of galactic law enforcer.

The actual sim part of the game is fairly standard fare. Your ship has various resources to manage: shield strength, laser strength, throttle level and energy level. In addition, various expendable weapons are available. As in the **X-Wing** series, you'll have to adjust energy levels, diverting more or less to weapons and shield, with the leftover being available for the engines. In addition, your overall energy is constantly being drained (think of it as fuel).

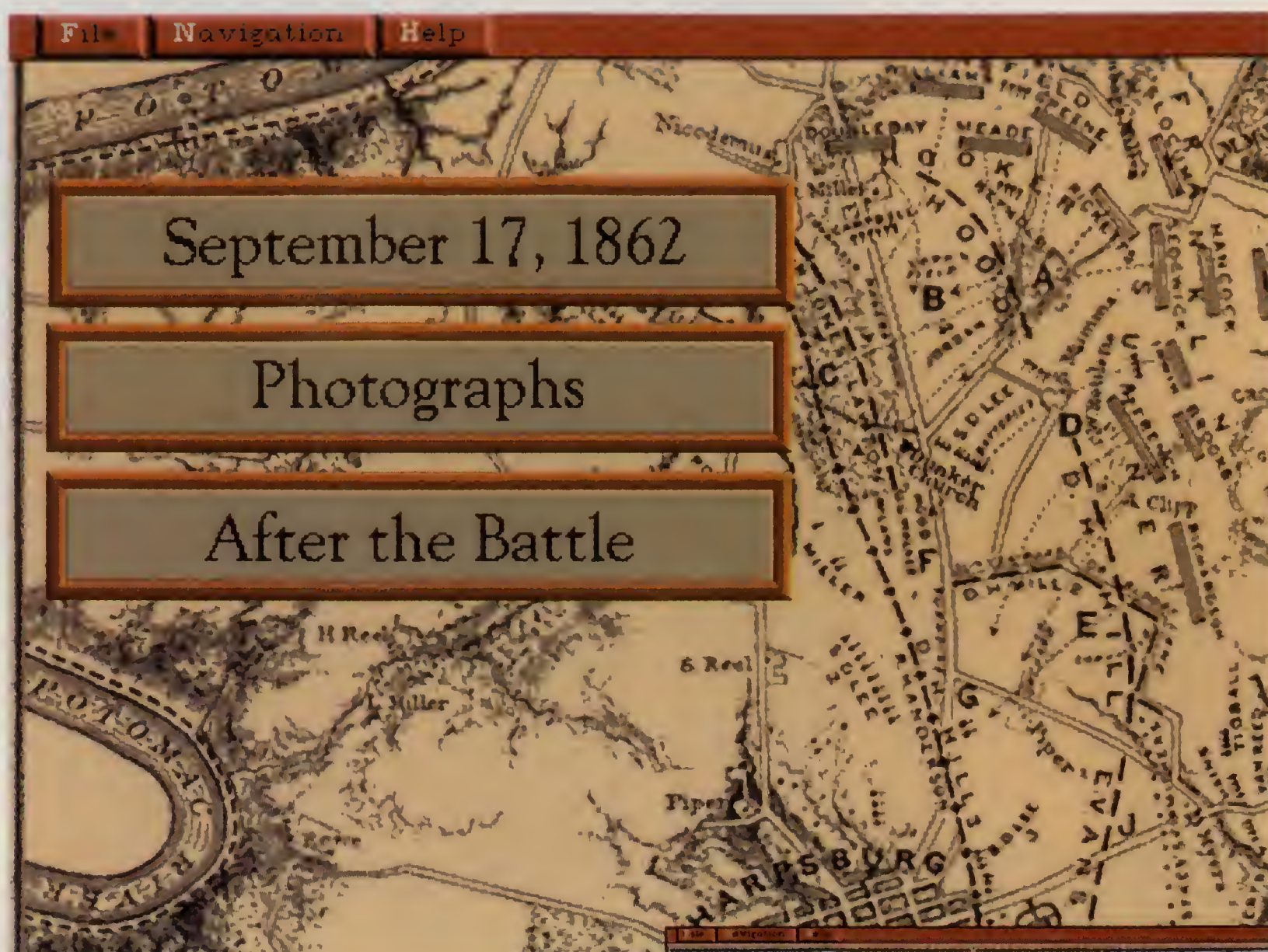
When your energy reserves run low, you can fly into a base for refueling (and repair of any damaged systems). Sadly for you, the universe is not put on hold while you're kicking back in the spaceport, swilling a few cold ones. The bad guys are always on the move. In order to see what they're up to, you'll toggle on your long range scanner screen.

The scanner screen shows all of your bases as well as friendly ships. Each base or ship has a scanner range. If any enemy ships are within the range of a scanner, you'll pick those up as well. But space is vast, and ships and bases few, so there are also space buoys – which have high powered scanners built into them – you can drop along the way. Should you be struggling with big supply gaps ("scanned" space shows up as tinted, so this will be obvious immediately), you can fly out there and drop a new buoy. The problem is, while you're doing that, your enemies may be attacking a base, or friendly ships. Time management is going to be key in this game.

Rather than make you fly in conventional space to a distant destination, you can use that institution of all good pulp science fiction, hyperspace. In **Star Rangers**, hyperspace isn't an autopilot affair. Pick your destination and engage your hyperspace engines. You'll find yourself flying through a "tunnel" in space. If you keep completely inside this tunnel, you'll arrive exactly where you intended. However, if you fly "outside" the tunnel your final destination will be off, and it'll be off radically if you've really blown it.

Meanwhile, those enemies are still wailing on a friendly station!

Star Rangers ought to keep your adrenaline pumping, from the moment you boot it up until you've wasted the last bad guy. It's not planned as a particularly "deep" title, just lots of good, old-fashioned fun. What we saw was still early alpha, so we'll have to wait and see if the game lives up to the intended design.



War College

War College (to be published by **GameTek**) is **Intergalactic Development Inc.**'s newest product. **Intergalactic**, you may recall, were the developers of the **Universal Military Simulator** and **UMS II**. **War College** continues the legacy of the earlier products by being a completely 3D military simulation, but beyond that, it has a completely new look.

The **UMS** products had graphics that could only be called minimalist. **War College**, while it doesn't have animated figures jumping up and down, does have gorgeous battlefields showing the ripples and



folds of terrain by various tricks of shading. Armies take the form of 3D battle lines and move as an organic whole. As commander, you'll give your units orders along the lines of "march to this point," "wheel right," or "form a hollow square," and the battle lines will change to accommodate your wishes.

Many aspects of the game are configurable. You'll have access to virtually all of the game's database, and so can adjust lethality of various types of fire, "weight" the game in regard to morale or leadership factors, and the like.



War College runs in accelerated real time, so the budding commander will feel the same pressures felt by his or her historical counterpart. When starting a battle, you take command of a small unit, such as a corps, and will be given specific orders. If successful, in the next battle you'll get control of a larger unit, perhaps a division. With continued success, eventually you'll have control of the entire army.

Beyond the game itself, though, **War College** has a huge amount of interactive documentation. For each of the initial battles covered (Pharsalus 48BC, Austerlitz 1805, Antietam 1862, and Tannenberg 1914), you'll have the opportunity to explore all facets of the historical events, including information about the various weapons and units, biographies of the commanders involved, and much, much more. Hypertext links will let you surf your way through all this data.

The information contained is both informative and accessible. The ability to study a battle, then flip over to the simulation and actually play it out, should reinforce what you've just learned. Don't take this as a curse, but **War College** should prove to be a very educational product. If you're new to one of these battles, **War College** should provide an excellent introduction, and a very interesting gaming experience. With luck, we'll have a review for you next month.

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THE LOGIC FACTORY

FIRST LOOK



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HARDWARE

CH Products' new line

CH Products, makers of the widely respected **CH Flightstick Pro**, have announced their new lineup for Fall '95. Included are three new joysticks: the **F-16 Fighterstick** (the high end, programmable model), the **F-16 Combatstick** (mid-range) and the **F-16 Flightstick** (low-end). In addition, there is the **CH Throttle** and the **Pro Throttle**, both of which are point-and-click programmable (with 12 and 20 buttons, respectively).

For racing fans, the **CH Pedals** will offer both car and plane modes, but offer only a pivot motion. In order to run all this stuff, the **Gamecard Pro Automatic** which will work on PC's as fast as 450 MHz.

Mac owners will get two new products as well. Both **Pro Throttle** and **CH Pedals** will be available in Mac versions.

Domark supports 3D Blaster

Domark Software, Inc.'s recently announced that their upcoming **Terracide** (formerly know as **Berserker**) will support *Creative Labs, Inc.'s* **3D Blaster** graphics accelerator card. We hope to bring you more coverage on 3D cards in an upcoming issue.

Yamaha-ha-ha!

Yamaha Corp. of America (remember when *Yamaha* made mini-bikes?) has made the obvious jump from PC speaker systems to PC sound cards. **The WaveForce DB50XG** is a daughterboard that connects to any **Wave Blaster** compatible connector. It takes advantage of the new Yamaha XG MIDI format. Release is planned for Sept. '95, and SRP is \$249.

Diamond in the not-so-rough

Diamond has announced an MPEG compatible daughtercard, the **Motion Video Player 2000**. \$249 (or \$449 for a version with 2 megs of VRAM) gets you accelerated MPRG-1 audio and video decompression for 30 frames per second playback of MPEG games. The unit is compatible with *Diamond's* **Stealth64 Video 3000 Series**.

Falcon flies faster

Falcon Northwest Computer Systems now have a 133 MHz Pentium addition their "game PC" line of PCs. We've just received our review unit and next month we'll let you know if it really is "the ultimate gaming machine." For more information, contact them at (800) 258-6778. Tell them *Strategy Plus* sent you.

In brief...

QQP is releasing two CD collections. **War At Sea** includes **The Grandest Fleet**, **The Lost Admiral**, and **WWII Battles of the South Pacific**. **Dealer's Choice** has **Solitaire's Journey**, **Bridge Olympiad**, and **Zig Zag**... *Blizzard Entertainment* will be releasing both **Warcraft II** and **Pax Imperia 2** in shareware versions prior to their commercial release... *Intracorp* will be the distributor of *TalonSoft's*

"**Battleground**" products, including **Ardennes** and **Gettysburg**...At the eleventh hour (too late for our preview), *Capstone* announced that they had signed Brent Spiner, Lolita Davidovich, and Ron Perlman to do the voices for **Chronomaster**...*MicroProse* is still thinking about what to call its **Master of Orion** sequel, with **Master of Xentari** on the way out...

NEXT MONTH

Strategy Plus reports from the set of **Wing Commander IV**
Holiday previews from ECTS

FEATURES

Star Control III
Kingdom O' Magic
Gender Wars
CyberMage: Darklight Awakening

REVIEWS

Battleground: Ardennes
Fade to Black
Magic Carpet 2: The Netherworlds

TIPS

Command & Conquer
Buried in Time
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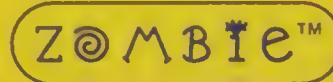
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CD-ROM GAME

Sifting through pasteboard: GEN CON 1995



This young lady (?), caught prowling around in Origin's *CyberMage*, would fit in quite well with the GEN CON crowd

On August 10th, hordes of barbarians, Klingons, and gamers, gamers, gamers descended on Milwaukee, WI. The occasion was GEN CON 1995, and it was *the* place to be for role players and especially collectible card gamers. Computer gamers didn't fare quite as well, but there were some bright spots, and even some new announcements. In no particular order, here are some of the highlights of the show.

Westwood Studios was running an ongoing network **Command & Conquer** battle. There was a consistent crowd around their booth through all four days of the show. Pre-release interest in this game seems to be very high, and from what we've seen, totally justified. The interface is transparent, and the action intense. What more could you want from a real time strategy game?

Origin was there showing (in addition to some of their older titles) *CyberMage* and *Crusader: No Remorse*. We had a chance to get some hands-on time with *Crusader*, and all we can say is: WOW! Another one to look forward to! *CyberMage* is Origin's entry into the first-person 3D genre. Older titles like *Ultima Underworld* and *System Shock* were critically acclaimed, but apparently didn't do as well in the stores as Origin had hoped. *CyberMage* attempts to hit the perfect balance between adventuring depth and action. See our September issue for early previews of both of these games.

Next stop was the FASA booth. Lots of **BattleTech** stuff happening there, but what we wanted to see was **SVGA Multi-Player BattleTech**. From what we gather, the gameplay is fairly similar to that of the current, EGA **Multi-Player BattleTech**, but of course the SVGA graphics make it look so much nicer, and seemed to give more accurate targeting abilities. In a brief demo we couldn't really immerse ourselves in the overall multi-player world — the social side of **BattleTech**, so to speak. We did have a chat with a dedicated fan of the current version, and the big picture he described sounded very intriguing.

Mindscape/SSI was there, showing tons of stuff, all at different times. Some of the many titles on display included **Fantasy General**, **Wargame Construction Set III: Rifles**, **Silent Hunter**, **Steel Panthers**, **Angel DeVoid**, **Warhammer Fantasy Battles**, **SU-27 Flanker**, **Thunderscape**, and **Entomorph**. Whew! Hands on time at this booth was limited to **Fantasy General**. Bottom line: if you were intrigued by **Panzer General** but aren't into modern warfare, run out and buy **Fantasy General** as soon as it is released.

Next stop was *Legend*. They were quietly wowing visitors with demos of **Shannara** (based on the best-selling Terry Brooks novels) and **Mission Critical**, which will feature (among others) Michael Dorn of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

Descent was a big hit at GEN CON. It was being demoed in its on-line configuration (along with **Air Warrior**) in the *GENie* booth, as well as in its LAN form in the *Interplay* booth. The latter added some VR eyeglasses to enhance the experience. Once we snuck past the line of stumbling "blind to the real world" VR players, we found a demo of **Descent to Undermountain** running. This builds upon the engine used in **Descent**, and puts players in one of those strange creature-filled caverns that seem to pop up like fungi in fantasy worlds (what do all those critters eat down there, when no adventurers decide to come down and offer themselves as a snack? A kind of Cartesian dilemma...). Anyway, *Interplay* also had the latest build of **Conquest of the New World** running, and early looks at **Kingdom: The Far Reaches 2** and **Dragon Dice**. This last one will be to the physical version of **Dragon Dice** what *MicroProse's* version of **Magic: the Gathering** is to the *Wizards of the Coast* version. It will offer both stand-alone and on-line versions. **Dragon Dice** actually looked pretty interesting.

Koei was showing both recent efforts such as **New Horizons** and **Celtic Tales** (reviews of both in last issue) and the upcoming **Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV** and **PTO II**. **Romance IV** was actually running on a *Sega Saturn*, (though there will be a PC version) and we're told a mouse controller is in the Saturn's future. There are those of us in the office who gleefully anticipate kicking back on the couch, putting our feet up, and diving into a **Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV** session. Koei will also support the *Sony Playstation*. We'll have more coverage of both of these titles soon.

Hidden away in a small booth, *IntraCorp* was showing **Witchaven**, **TekWar**, **Harpoon II Deluxe Multimedia**, and **Chronomaster**. We're told the demo of **Witchaven** that's on the nets has been generating some very positive feedback, but our personal preference in *IntraCorp's* 3D first person lineup goes to **TekWar**. We love the way the bad guys use cover, sneak up behind you, and generally act like real bad guys, rather

than extras from *The Night of the Living Dead*. See this issue for a review of **Harpoon II Deluxe Multimedia** and a preview of **Chronomaster**.

The curious thing about GEN CON was the intensity of people's feelings towards the computer gaming booths. Gamers who owned computers loved having them there. Every company's booth seemed to be doing a brisk business, either in curious onlookers for future products, or in people with cash to spend on current products. The folks who haven't entered the electronic gaming hobby, on the other hand, were totally miffed at the presence of computers all over the place. I suppose they felt that their last bastion of silicon-free space has been compromised.

We can't imagine this trend reversing, though. All the companies we spoke to seemed pleased with the results, and really, there aren't any consumer specific electronic gaming conventions (at least not at the national level). Maybe if and when *Wizards of the Coast* gets into the computer end of things (we've heard rumours that they are contemplating this step, but all they'd tell us is that they are diversifying) it will "legitimize" our passion to the paper gamers out there.

Magic: The Gathering continues to have an almost cult-like following. One of our most terrifying images at the show was walking to our car, the heat index at 110, the air shimmering over the concrete surface, and seeing four teenagers sitting cross-legged on the pavement, playing **Magic**.

Overall GEN CON is a wacky and fun place to be. Everyone there is an enthusiast of one kind of gaming or another. In addition to games, there were tons of fantastic fantasy artwork, booths selling swords and chainmail (including our favorite, the chainmail bikini!), duels being fought, and sci-fi celebs galore. It was really great meeting fans of our mag, and we'd like to thank each and every one of you for stopping by for a chat. We can't wait to do it all again next year.

Peter Smith



SSI's *Fantasy General* should be a big hit with strategy gaming fans

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

A movie poster for Wing Commander IV. The background is a dark, starry space. In the center, three men in blue flight suits are shown. The man on the left is looking towards the camera. The man in the middle is seen from the back, looking out into space. The man on the right is looking towards the camera. The title "WING COMMANDER IV" is written in a large, stylized, orange-outlined font across the middle of the image.

WING COMMANDER IV

December 8, 1995.



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CRUSADER: NO REMORSE

What do you get when you combine the best of **Relentless**, **Ultima VIII** and **Syndicate**? You get **Crusader: No Remorse**, a new action adventure from *Origin*. Put away your shields and swords and strap on a laser rifle and helmet to enter a world full of robots, a set of seemingly endless rooms full of boilers and strange equipment, and a series of puzzles and an unfolding mystery that other more traditionally adventure-oriented companies might do well to pay attention to.

You've read the story — it's of little significance once you get into the game, except perhaps for atmosphere. At least until you get a good ways into it; then the story starts to get interesting. The pure gameplay in **Crusader** itself has atmosphere a-plenty, though — you never know what's going to pop up and surprise you as you rush madly from room to room.

The best part of **Crusader** is the gameplay. It's gorgeous to look at, of course, in a way that no movie-oriented or digitized-actor/object-oriented design could ever be; for my tastes, at least, *these* are the kind of cutting-edge visuals a computer game design should have. They're incredibly crisp, wonderfully detailed, fluidly animated, and thus easy to lose yourself in. But gorgeous as they are, they fail to distract the player from the pace of the game itself — you'll find yourself *wanting* to stop and admire different areas of the design when you can't, 'cause there's some maniac with a laser who's just rounded the corner and is ready for a quick firefight. Firefights in **Crusader** are way more exciting than they are in most first-person 3D games, by the way.

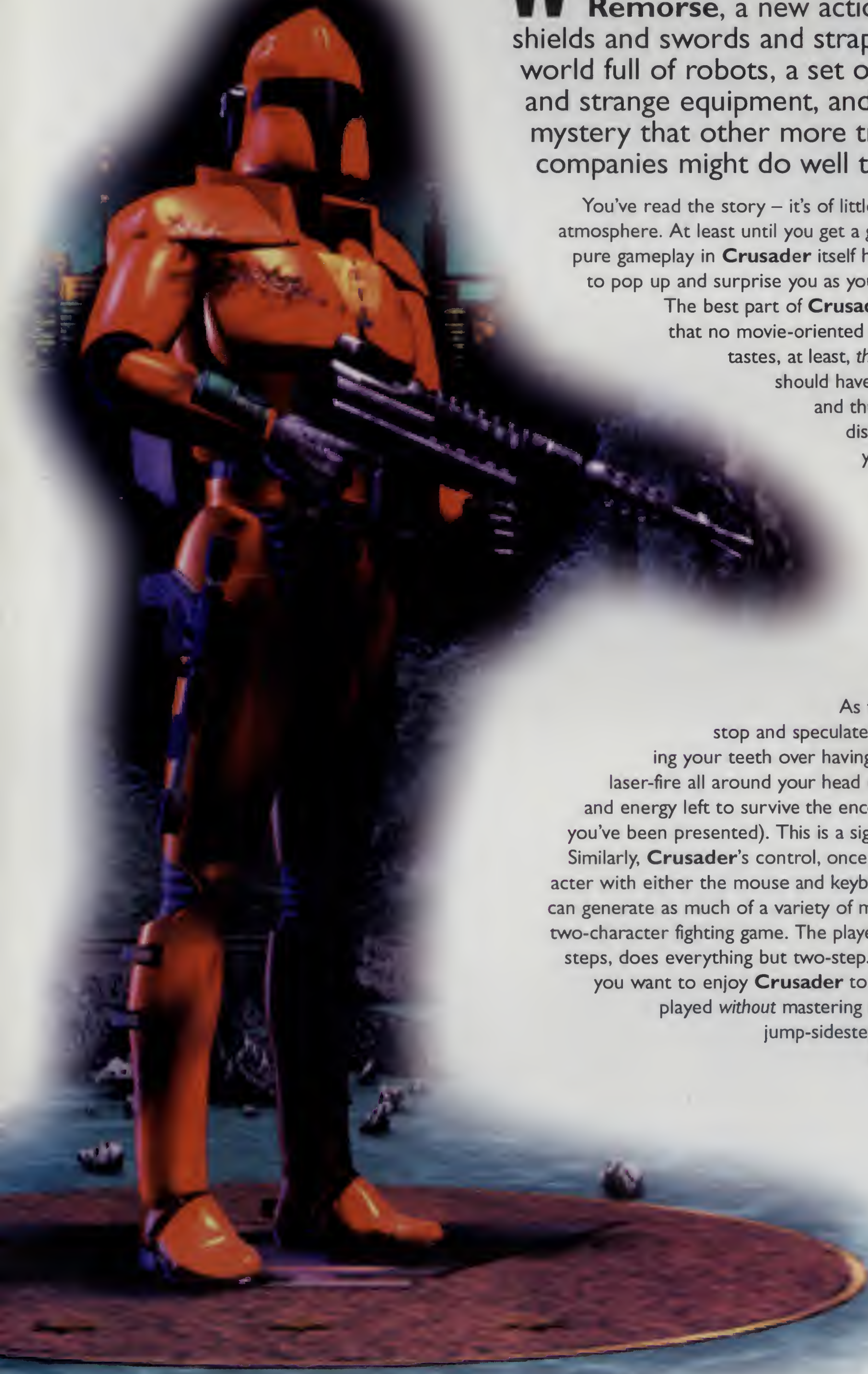
Crusader's pacing is what makes it outstanding at a time when gameplay seems to have become an almost lost art in the industry; if it had been set *just* a bit faster, it would be virtually unplayable. If it had been slowed down *just* a tiny bit, it might have proven boring and too easy to fight through.

As the game stands, you'll find yourself with just enough time to stop and speculate on how to handle the situation you've run into without gnashing your teeth over having to enter combination-lock sequences while robots are hailing laser-fire all around your head (well, they *will* do that sometimes, but you'll have enough time and energy left to survive the encounter — just enough, if you're lucky — and solve the problem you've been presented). This is a sign of careful game design.

Similarly, **Crusader's** control, once gotten used to, is generally spot-on. You can handle your character with either the mouse and keyboard combined, or just from the keyboard (my preference), and can generate as much of a variety of moves as is typically available for a single character in a good two-character fighting game. The player character in **Crusader** jumps, runs, rolls, crouches, side-steps, does everything but two-step. It takes time to master more than the basic maneuvers, but if you want to enjoy **Crusader** to the fullest, it's worth the time to do so (the game can be played *without* mastering more than a few maneuvers, if so desired). Show off your run-jump-sidestep-roll to friends watching you play — or perfect some other similar combination to handle a particularly tricky combat situation.

The AI running the computer opponents in the game generally seems pretty good — sometimes computer characters will accidentally blow each other up while trying to fire at you, while other times they'll pace mindlessly behind a wall as you approach them, seemingly unable to figure out how to use a door — but these are exceptions in the design. Once again, the software's ability to run the opponents well, so that they prove just the right kind of challenge, is proof of thoughtfulness in design.

The AI has an interesting element in that if you find yourself playing through a particular sequence of the game more than once, while the puzzles and levers etc. will remain the same, your opponents and what they bring to the show will vary somewhat. If you're counting on killing that third guard to get his med-pack next time around to





I'm not talking to you until you turn that flame off!



Guess I'll have to walk the straight & narrow again, sigh

survive, don't make any such assumptions – he may just have some ammunition, or even just a few credits for you to collect. The game seems to regenerate this inventory somewhat randomly upon each restore from a saved game. On the other hand, care has been taken in the design so that you're not stuck too often; once or twice I was completely out of ammunition with no way to find more (no way to shoot down my "supply," in other words), but most times I found characters offered up the right necessities upon their demise. Bottom line, you'll get some of what you want most of the time, but there are no guarantees. Rather lifelike, that.

One of the interesting real-time aspects of the game is that there are a series of scanner turrets scattered throughout the game. If you manage to destroy them before they scan you, you prevent the complex-wide intruder alert from going off. If they catch you and the alarm goes off, you can shut it off if you get to the appropriate panel soon enough, but any delays here will result in



Yeah, but how do I get into the room over there?!

the vectoring of opponents towards your area, resulting in some pretty scary firefights. So while you play, you have to pay real attention to whether or not you can sneak past the security systems set up to discover you. This makes proceeding through **Crusader** a much

more interesting tactical process than is typical in an action game; your goal is not just to move as fast as you can, but rather to move as *intelligently* as you can, to handle both the combat and your overall goals effectively.

A wonderful quality in **Crusader** is that the rooms are not just static. Most of the objects inside the walls of a room are destroyable, for instance; often you've got **Dungeon Master**-like traps, levers and puzzles to deal with scattered throughout a level. You can use the explosive or inflammable qualities of some of the barrels and structures present in certain rooms to good tactical effect – if you see an opponent who's impervious to your fire, perhaps blowing up that furnace nearby will do the trick (be prepared to see said opponent run screaming in flames from



You play paintball; I'll play target practice instead

It's gorgeous to look at... these are the kind of cutting-edge visuals a computer game design should have.

the resulting apocalypse, though. Faint-hearts will object, the rest of us will just say, "cool!" – or, er, "hot!"). Careful about what you blow up, though – even though for the most part the game's designed to keep you from destroying elements which will prevent you from progressing further, sometimes you may find yourself wiping out structures which might have been more useful left intact. Use your judgment in this part of the game.

Origin have brought their movie-making approach to computer game design to bear on **Crusader**, but lightly – which is a good thing. Various cut scenes throughout the game keep you from feeling too isolated in your crusade, and remind you of your objectives as well as commenting on your progress. These scenes are both unobtrusive and professional in approach, and take just about the right amount of time during gameplay to seem appropriate for the medium. Again, an excellent effort at balancing the overall design.

If there are any negatives to **Crusader**, they're what you might expect with an *Origin* game. The design's happiest with a full install (many megabytes, hope you have wide-open prairies of empty disk space on your hard drive for this one!), likes lotsa RAM (16MB isn't asking too much) and of course a fast video card. It runs smooth as glass on a P90 or faster, given a full install. Smaller installs may bring back memories of **Ultima VII** for some people on some systems – too much hard-disk virtual memory swapping going on.

If you've got the equipment, though, the positives significantly outweigh the negatives; not since **Relentless** has such an exciting, beautiful action adventure shown for the PC. Calling it an action game does **Crusader** an injustice – unless, like me, you consider a well-designed action game the epitome of what computer gaming's all about. In which case, **Crusader's** one of the best action games out there right now.



Jeez, what a mess! And to think I did it all myself!



Reminds me of MIT the day after Finals...

Steve Wartofsky

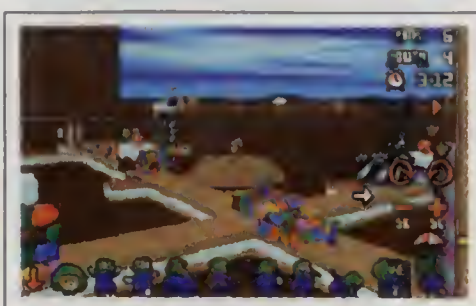
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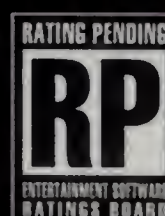
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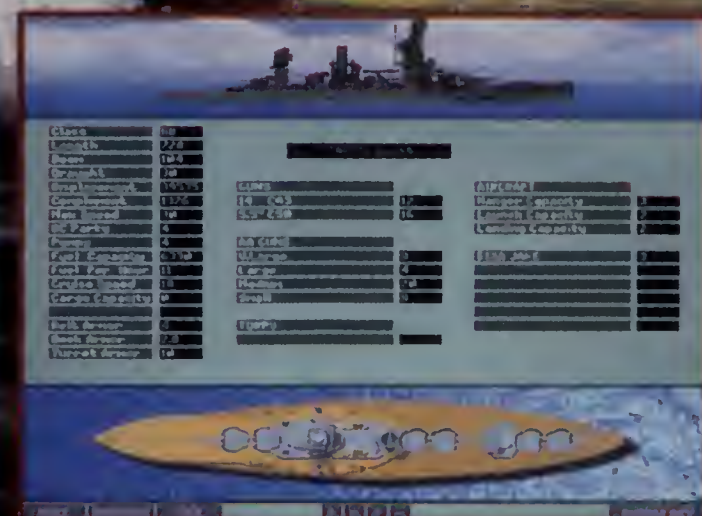
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Reader Service No. 141



IBM 256-COLOR SVGA DISPLAYS.

Shannara

Legend brings the novels of Terry Brooks to life in their latest epic adventure

The *Shannara* novels by Terry Brooks are the best-selling fantasy books in the world, and *Legend Entertainment* has them. *Sierra's Quest for Glory* series of games, designed by the award winning tandem of Corey and Lori Cole, were particularly popular with both the adventure and role-playing crowds, and *Legend* has them, too. The end result? **Shannara**, the game, which sports *Legend's* highest budget to date.

Your first evidence of the improved budget is the visuals. The only fantasy game as good-looking is *Legend's* last adventure, **Death Gate**. By sticking with a hand-drawn style of art (particularly appropriate for the genre), *Legend* avoids the problems other companies have faced when



using digitized video. The game features a score by the Fatman, full digital voice acting and *Legend's* usual icon-based interface; however, what you really want to know about is the story, right?

The thickening plot

The story of **Shannara** is new, and set in the world developed by Brooks in the novels. It takes place in the missing generation between the books, and will feature characters familiar to readers of the series (familiarity with the books will not be required to play the game, however). Brendel, Balinor, Allanor and others make sustained appearances.

The main plot of the story concerns Brona, who in *Sword of Shannara* was killed. He's resurrected by a Gnome Shaman, Brona's zealous follower. Once back, Brona is stronger than ever, and now seeks revenge on the people who killed him. To guarantee his survival he destroys the

only thing which can destroy him – the Sword of Shannara. He casts a spell that destroys the sword. The sword, which wasn't used to slay Brona but possesses the power to show the wielder the truth of their life (Brona couldn't deal with it), will need to be reassembled in order for Brona to be sent back.

Unfortunately it won't be as easy as "find the pieces of the sword and go to the local blacksmith." As Jak Ohmsford, the son of the original slayer of Brona, Shea Ohmsford, you will not only have to recover the pieces, but Allanor informs you that you will also need a magic item from each of the different races (your basic elves, trolls, dwarves and such) to put the sword back together. Not only do you need the items, but you'll also have to enlist a companion from each race to assist you. You will have to mend old wounds as well as convince your potential companions that they need to accompany you on your journey in order to defeat Brona and restore the sword.



The Conspirators

Terry Brooks grew up surrounded by the printed word, which eventually bore fruit first at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, in the form of an English Degree; later while practicing law he was able to complete an epic fantasy, *The Sword of Shannara*. It was published in 1977, and became the first work of fiction ever to crack *The New York Times* trade paperback bestseller list. By 1986, Brooks was so successful he gave up law to become a full-time writer.

Brooks followed *The Sword of Shannara* with *The Elfstones of Shannara* and *The Wishsong of Shannara*. The prolific Brooks has also authored the *Magic Kingdom* series, which includes *The Tangle Box*, *Magic Kingdom For Sale-Sold!*, *The Black Unicorn* and *Wizards at Large*. The 90's saw Brooks return to Shannara with *The Heritage of Shannara* series, which consists of

The Scions of Shannara, *The Druid of Shannara*, *The Elf Queen of Shannara* and *The Talismans of Shannara*. His most recent novel is *Witches Brew*, released in April of 1995, and marks a return to the *Magic Kingdom* series.

Corey and Lori Cole are best known for their work with *Sierra* on the **Quest for Glory** series. In addition to these titles, they have also collaborated on **The Castle of Dr. Brain** and **Mixed-Up Fairy Tales**. Corey is a recovered professional programmer (networking, desktop publishing and word processing) and has written several scenarios for pen-and-paper role-playing games. He is handling most of the programming chores on **Shannara**. Lori is writing most of the dialogue for the games, and is directing the art production.

Legend Entertainment first crawled out from under a rock called *Infocom* in 1989, they were founded by ex-*Infocom*ie Bob Bates (who had designed **Sherlock** and **Arthur**) and Mike Verdu (**Gateway**). Their earliest titles included

Steve Meretzky's **Spellcasting** games, as well as Bob's own **TIMEQUEST**, which was sadistically hard (something Bob gleefully admits). In addition to the Coles, their stable of designers includes Meretzky, who still shows up from time to time to work on something like **Superhero League of Hoboken**, Glen Dahlgren, master of laser tag and designer of **Death Gate** and the upcoming game based on the novels of Robert Jordan, Josh Mandel, the ex-*Sierra* yuckster responsible for **Freddy Pharkas** and **Space Quest 6** and the man who will be responsible for dropping us off at **Callahan's Crosstime Saloon**, and Michael Lindner, who designed **Companions of Xanth** and is currently working on **Star Control III**. In 1994, *Legend* partnered up with *Random House*, which has given them access to all of these licenses, and should mean that your favorite fantasy or science-fiction writer may one day find their name emblazoned on a *Legend* product.



Quest for combat

Perhaps stealing a page from their own **Quest for Glory** series of games, the Coles have included combat in **Shannara**, but they've done it in such a way that the player should not seek out combat as a means of improving their characters. On the contrary, combat should be avoided; you can die from it. Those who die in combat still stand a chance of being aligned with Brona.

Which brings us to "the Floyd Moment." Say what? What's that, you may ask? It's that moment in a game where you suddenly feel a slight tug at your heart about the choices you've made in the game. The origin of the term is Steve Meretzky's brilliant **Planetfall**, where you send the robot Floyd to his death in order to save yourself.

Shannara possesses such a moment; whether or not *Legend* can pull it off will depend on how well they manage to envelop the player in the world of **Shannara**. At one point in the game the player will be faced with a



choice they may not want to have to make – and the choice here can have serious repercussions later on in the story. The end result of this is to show you that being a hero isn't all it's cracked up to be. There's no glory in saving the world – just a lot of hard work and the possibility of death at every turn.

Legend has a reputation for producing the most literary adventure games on the market, with detailed plots, believable characters and interesting events. If **Shannara** is successful at adding that emotional element, look for it to be one of the brightest stars this holiday season.

◆ Steve Bauman



Down the road...

Callahan's Crosstime Saloon

Callahan's Crosstime Saloon, due in the middle of 1996, is a game based on Spider Robinson's series of extremely popular (and incredibly well-written) novels. Designed by Josh Mandel, who's more known for light-hearted fare like **Freddy Pharkas** and **Space Quest 6**, **Callahan** may surprise some gamers by taking on the darker edge of the novels.

The hedonistic bar is the setting for the novels, time and place Long Island, New York, present day. So how is this spacey? The humans who hang out there are all a bit odd – some are psychic, others possess advanced skills. The bar is also frequented by aliens, who for whatever reason aren't bothered in this place.

As with most bars, a series of regulars drop in to pour out their hearts to Callahan, the owner of the bar. People walk in and say things like, "Oh, the world is going to end tomorrow," and the people of the bar get together and solve the problem. That's the basic format of the books, and the game will follow suit. There are currently 10 sub-stories the player will have to deal with, all of which begin and end at the bar.

What may set the game apart is that it's more about characters than locations and puzzle solving. Real people with real problems. That's the theme of the game. It sounds really interesting, and we'll be sure to keep you posted about further developments.

Wheel of Time

Glen Dahlgren is the man responsible for bringing Robert Jordan's epic *Wheel of Time* series of novels to a computer near you (the game will not be called **Wheel of Time**). It's the biggest project *Legend* has ever done, and they're pulling out all the stops for it. First, the technical design of the game is a radical departure from previous *Legend* titles. The game will be entirely 3D (like **Under a Killing Moon**) and will run in Windows. It will utilize motion capture for characters and combat, featuring what sounds like an incredibly innovative combat system based on, of all things, current fighting games. Visually, *Legend* are going for an immersive 3D game featuring a graphic look that's not reality-based but instead looks like the hand-drawn art of **Death**.

The world will be alive, with people going about their daily routines whether you're present or not. You will control the Dragon reborn (something fans of the series will understand). The Dark One, who was put away by the original Dragon, escapes and the reborn Dragon will defeat him. The story is incredibly detailed and would take an entire article just to sketch out.

Glen is a very opinionated guy. He's taken a look at all of the 3D designs and analyzed everything right and wrong about them. He has some great ideas, and his design for **Wheel of Time** is wildly ambitious. We won't see it until late 1996.



Mission Critical

Mike Verdu's **Mission Critical**, which should be released "any day now," is an epic space adventure offering a diverse and exciting challenge for adventurers of all levels. Verdu is knowledgeable about hard science, and is thus interested in constructing plausible science fiction.

The game will feature Michael Dorn (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*) and Patricia Charbonneau (*RoboCop II*). Full-motion video is present, but *Legend* is quick to point out that it's there mainly to supplement the game.



MC concerns itself with questions about the nature of humanity. Its setting is outer space; the player is the only survivor on a ship after a battle. Dorn and Charbonneau had planned your survival, and will lead you along to the completion of your first task, which will be to get the ship running. Once it's ready, you'll be attacked by an alien fleet and be forced to defend yourself. The combat segments, which have drawn a few concerned letters from readers, is not a twitchy-arcade game grafted into an adventure but rather a strategic game which starts out easy and gradually gets more difficult.



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Reader Service No. 131

Dungeon Keeper

Is Bullfrog's latest innovation the future of the CRPG?



Peter Molyneux, the head of Bullfrog Productions and the man many consider the finest game designer in the world right now, really likes role-playing games. "I've always wanted to do one. They're my favorite type of games," he said back in April, "but the trouble with them is that they haven't changed one iota since the first **Wizardry** game [thanks *Sir-tech*]. In that game you had a group of heroes who wandered down corridors killing monsters while looking for treasure. That was it."

Which is fine for some gamers, but isn't for Molyneux and Bullfrog. No, they don't do that many conventional designs. They usually start with something which vaguely resembles other titles, then put a hard twist on where they started, and end up with a unique design as a result. Which is an appropriate description of Bullfrog's upcoming CRPG, **Dungeon Keeper**. On the surface it sounds like **Wizardry** with a fancy **DOOM** engine. Dismissing it as something that derivative would be missing out on a design which could quite possibly be one of the best games of the year.

Stop me if you've heard this one before

A number of heroes descend upon a dungeon, searching for a hidden treasure. The people in the town fear the evil Dungeon Keeper,

who's recruited a cast of nasty monsters to protect his bounty. The heroes enter the dungeon and defeat creatures in order to earn experience and boost their stats, with their final goal being the theft of as much gold as possible.

Uh, Mr. Molyneux, what's the big deal about this? It sounds just like all of those other CRPGs out there, the ones that you yourself criticized.

"What I've decided to do is turn it [the CRPG] on its head," he explained.

Sure. OK. How?

"With this game you are the evil Dungeon Keeper, while up to eight other humans over a network can be the heroes [or can be computer controlled]."

Now we're talking. What Molyneux has done is turn the management of the dungeon itself into something of a strategy game for one player, while making the CRPG aspect of it available to the heroes.

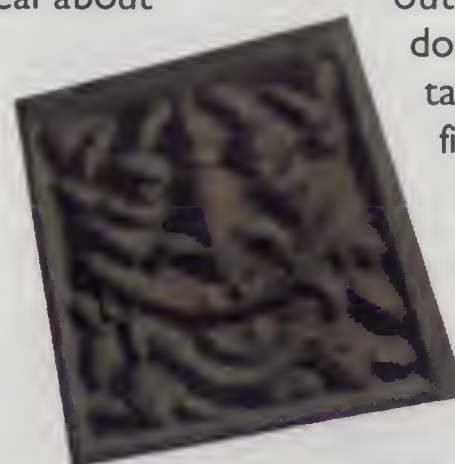
At the beginning of the game, you have an army of goblins who build the dungeon for you. You start with the bare-bones of a dungeon — the treasure room, the center of power and an armory. As the game goes on you can upgrade these rooms to make them larger, with bigger treasure rooms to hold more goodies, bunks for your burgeoning army (so your little monsters

will have a place to sleep at night) and an upgraded armory, which allows you to develop bigger and better weapons.

The Dungeon Keeper designs the dungeon, placing monsters and traps wherever they see fit. Where do you find these monsters? Why you advertise, of course. According to Molyneux, "These creatures don't just appear out of nowhere. You have to place a job advert for them. There's a job center for monsters that you can recruit [them] from."

It's not enough just to hire them. You also have to be a good boss so they don't run off. "You have to hire monsters and keep them employed. How do you keep a monster employed? There are basically two ways to motivate your staff. The first is basically to pay them money, but you really don't want to do that. The second, and preferred method of influence, is fear. Say you have a band of ten goblins and you want to maintain their loyalty. What's the best way to do that? Kill off five of them. Ritual sacrificing is really really important. You have to prove to the people below you that you're evil. This is a dungeon, after all." Joe Stalin would get all warm and fuzzy at the thought.

You can't just place the monsters anywhere — this is a *realistic* dungeon simulation, after all. If you place your giant spiders next to your goblins, the spiders might decide to attack the goblins, or vice versa. Some of the monsters aren't very bright, either. You can send them out to patrol certain areas, but if you don't trust them with that task you can take control of it yourself, using a first- or third-person 3D perspective (all of the dungeons are rendered in 3D, so you can zoom in or out on any area). However, if you decide to lend a personal hand you'll have to make sure you also keep recruiting more help (you can never have enough good monsters) and managing the dungeon, because here come the heroes.



Hero sandwich

As the Dungeon Keeper, your ultimate goal is to protect your treasure chamber. It is there that you store all of your evil money. Your performance early in the game can determine your success later on. If you lose focus and a bunch of heroes start stealing gold and escaping, even more heroes will appear, because they will have heard that your dungeon is easy picking.

Ah, the heroes. In traditional CRPG fashion they have stats; one strategy for building up your

character would be to enter the dungeon, kill off a few creatures, and run away. Return later (fully healed, but at a cost), kill a few things, and run away again. Stats are kept for the usual physical attributes as well as experience and monsters killed. One interesting feature will allow players to take their saved player around with them to other people's dungeons as well.

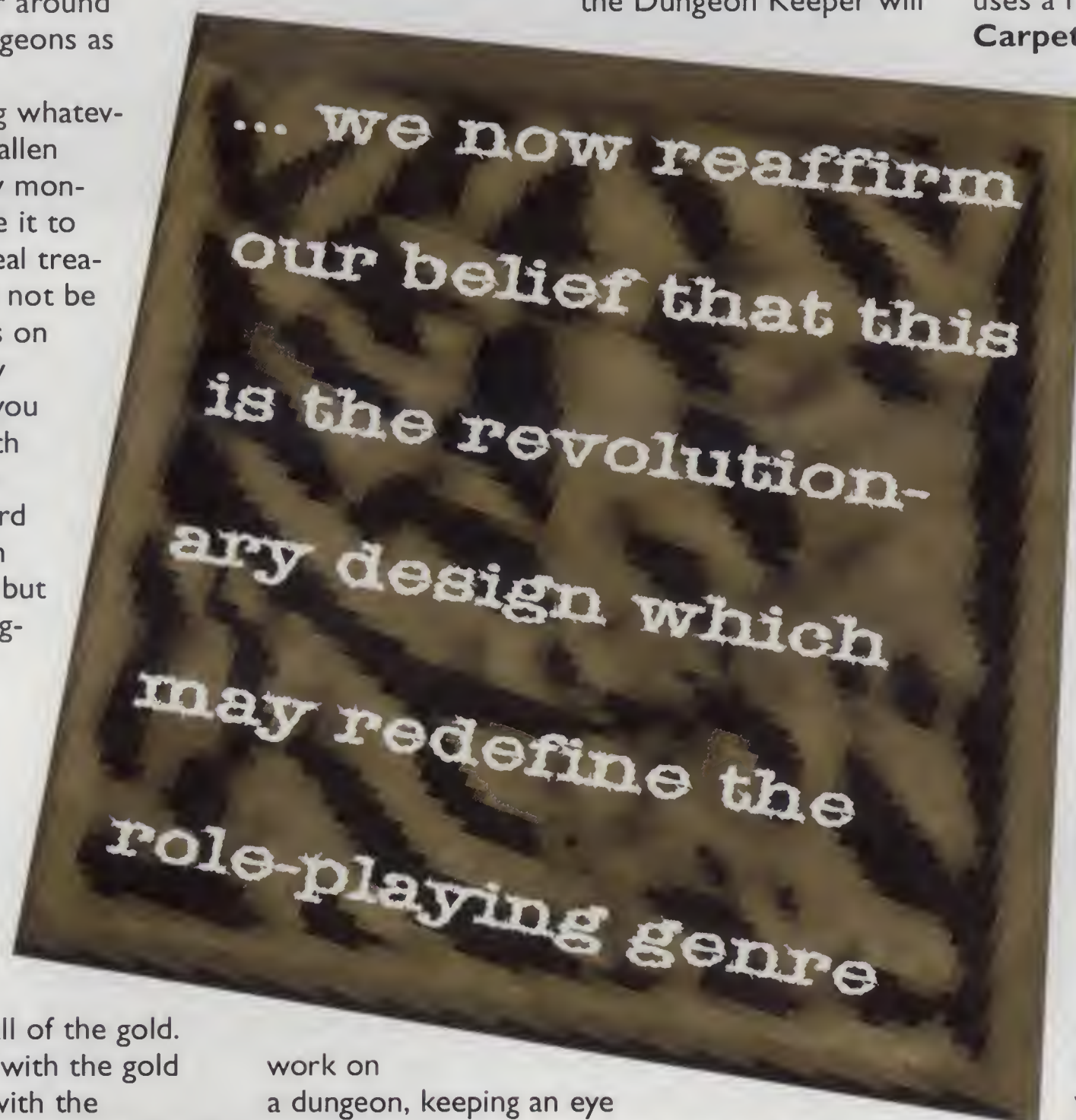
Heroes can gain gold by taking whatever is lying around (left by other fallen heroes or by particularly wealthy monsters). If a hero manages to make it to your treasure room, they can steal treasure. However, they may or may not be able to steal all of it – it depends on their strength and what else they decide to carry. For example, if you have two different characters with equal strength, the one with the heavy and cumbersome longsword will not be able to carry as much gold as the one with the dagger, but if you get attacked by a large dragon on your way out, you can't bribe your way no matter what.

Multi-player madness

In multi-player mode players could choose to work in tandem to get the gold. One could carry weapons and defend, while the other carries all of the gold. However, I'd hate to be the one with the gold and my back turned to the guy with the weapons. There's also another thing that players may be interested in doing. If any of the invading heroes takes over the center of power, *that hero* controls the dungeon and gets to be the Dungeon Keeper. Now *that's* cool.

This is not to imply that **Dungeon Keeper** is only entertaining over a network (Lord knows the vast majority of us don't have one in our house). In single-player mode, you are always the Dungeon Keeper, but you can build a dungeon and the program will record everything that you've done in a saved game. If you give that to a friend, they can invade your dungeon as it's being created on their computer.

You can also play multi-player on one machine. The way this works is that one player will use the computer for five minutes while the other sits around and stares at the walls. When you switch with the other human, the computer takes over the inactive player's game. Basically, the Dungeon Keeper will



work on a dungeon, keeping an eye on the time and setting things up so the other player will have a tough time invading. Once that's done, the other player can invade, also keeping an eye on time and making sure they do whatever it is they want to do before the computer takes over.

Oddly enough, with the multi-player aspects of the design, this game could make the CRPG more like a pen-and-paper RPG, that is, making it a more social event for large groups of people. Consider a linked network game where the Dungeon Keeper (or dungeon master) is building the dungeon while the entire office is trying to steal his/her treasure. Imagine roaming the halls wondering what evil things your co-worker has in store for you – in many ways it could play out as the ultimate **DOOM** death-match, with the main difference being that the

dungeon is a dynamically changing real environment. Does this sound like fun or what?

Who needs graphics?

On the technical front, **Dungeon Keeper** uses a highly modified version of the **Magic Carpet** engine. This virtually guarantees excellent graphics, with both low and high-resolution modes for your pleasure. The speed hit for SVGA has been greatly reduced with this new version of the engine – even in the various stages of development that *Bullfrog* has shown to us we've been impressed by the speed of the 3D engine (**Magic Carpet 2**, for instance, is reputed to be 75% faster than the original).

The environment is quite realistic. Water reflects the surrounding environment, and the game features dynamic lighting, which means players will see flickering torches they can carry around with them, thus scattering realistically flickering light. Or when you shoot flaming missile weapons down hallways, the walls light up like they should. The sound is also receiving a lot of attention, with the "clomp clomp" of the heroes being particularly amusing.

Originality, Inc.

Bullfrog's games have always been a wee-bit different than those from other companies. Sure, **Hi-Octane** was conventional, but what about **Populous**, **Magic Carpet** and **Theme Park**?

While on the surface they may resemble other products, extended play reveals wildly original games with incredible depth and detail which few games manage to achieve.

We first broke the news of *Bullfrog's* goals with **Dungeon Keeper** in the June issue of *Strategy Plus*. It sounded like it could be one of the best games of the year – however, it was just a design. The demo at that time was very crude. After viewing the progress shown to us at *Electronic Arts' San Mateo* offices in August, however, we now reaffirm our belief that this is the revolutionary design which may redefine the role-playing genre; and we can't wait to create devilish dungeons to torment and torture each other with. What's a bit of torture amongst friends?



Steve Bauman



Allied General



Panzer General has been something of a phenomenon. The first war game (you've noticed that SSI was careful not to use that term in its advertising?) to really cross genre lines, **Panzer General** has pulled new blood into wargaming from the ranks of strategy gamers and elsewhere. The ease of play, the construction of a core of units tailored to your personal preferences, and the increase in abilities gained by these units via experience, all seem to be a big part of **Panzer General's** appeal. Overall good looks and multimedia glitz probably help with the initial enticement, but it's the playability that keeps us coming back.



Over six months after its release (at the time of this writing) the nets are still filled with enthusiastic players swapping strategies, starting up email games, and most importantly, asking the question, "What should I play next?" This last has been a tough one, as **Panzer General** is in a league of its own. There aren't many other wargames out there that can provide an increasing challenge for beginners while still being fun and accessible. SSI has heard your pleas! **Allied General** is headed our way.

SSI has tapped *Halestorm, Inc.* to do the follow-up, but **Panzer General** Associate Producer Rick Martinez is still providing a guiding hand, so we can anticipate that the strengths of the original will continue into the new game. The first, most obvious difference is that **Allied General** will run under Windows (optimized for Win '95 but the plan is for it to run under Win 3.11 as well). The game will ship on CD only. If you haven't found a good reason to upgrade yet, this might be it! Mac users will also be happy to learn that the Mac and Windows versions will be released at approximately the same time.



As in **Panzer General**, **Allied General** will have full multimedia treatment. Voice actors are being sought to ensure that the accents are authentic (you play a Brit, an American, or a Russian), and each campaign will have artwork which fits in with the nationality modeled. The Russian campaign will have an early industrial, rather bleak look, for

instance, while the American will be all flag-waving and Uncle Sam.

As suggested by the name, you'll get the chance to play as the various allies. There are three (almost four) different campaigns. As the British, you'll have the option of starting in the deserts of North Africa. Assuming you do well there, you'll be put in charge of the Western Front campaign. Russian soldiers are concerned with the Eastern Front, of course. Americans start at the Western Front, but it will be slightly different from the British Western Front campaign (hence it is almost a fourth campaign). When you play the same battle from the British and American campaigns, the auxiliary units will come from the other army. In other words, the auxiliary units in a British battle will be the core units in an



American battle, and vice versa. Victory conditions should be different as well. It should be interesting to see these battles from both sides.

Obviously, some of the more famous historical battles of **Panzer General** will be repeated in **Allied General**. But again, the point of view has changed. So, for instance the Bulge scenario in **Allied General** will begin with the German army at the point of their deepest penetration. This point is Day 1 in **Allied General**, with your task being to throw the Wehrmacht back.

The designers are striving for a bit more of a role playing feel to **Allied General**. When you start, you'll create a character. The game will maintain a listing of personal win/loss records for this character, as well as keep track of any campaign ribbons or medals he has earned for exceptional performance. The character may or may not be "international." If not, you'll create a character for each nationality.

There will be fewer core units in the new game. Overall unit density will thus be lower, allowing a



more open feel to the battlefield, with lots of fluid troop movements. On average, there'll be about 35% fewer units in an **Allied General** scenario than in a **Panzer General** scenario. A secondary benefit of this is to get the player more focused on the core units, which makes losses count even more than they did in **Panzer General**. In the early scenarios, however, players will be given a greater proportion of auxiliary troops to use as "fodder" while learning the game system.

In order to advance in the campaigns, major victories (keyed once again to dates) will still be important. If you fail, though, it won't be the end of the war. The Allied Command will just find a more experienced commander for its troops. You'll be shipped home, a broken man. Again, the intent here is to make the game hit you more personally, since the assumption is that, perhaps you couldn't achieve victory, but someone else could.

Another possible major change (though this is still in the "pending" file) is to the air modules. First, some history. The theory in

Panzer

General is that fighters are actually flying brief sorties. This explains why they can remain airborne for multiple turns; when you send them home to refuel, it actu-

ally represents them being taken off the flight line for maintenance. This theory doesn't really hold up as well for the longer ranges and flight times of some bombers. So, in **Allied General**, the proposed system will have you selecting a bomber at an airfield, and giving it orders to bomb a specified location. It will fly there, bomb the target, then fly directly home. This will much more closely reflect historical bomber flights, and is more in line with the way such sorties have been treated in many of Gary Grigsby's designs for SSI. Another proposed change is to be able to issue orders to a fighter unit to escort the bombers.

Thereafter, the unit will be attached to those bombers and remain with them for the duration of their mission. All such proposed changes are an attempt to make the game more realistic without losing any playability.

With three separate campaigns, **Allied General** should provide great play value, and we're promised as many, if not more, scenarios than were present in the earlier game. But just in case those ever get "played out," **AG** includes a scenario editor. You'll be able to start with any of the 38-40 maps used in the packaged scenarios, or one of many extra maps included just for user-created scenarios. The editor is very flexible, giving you access to the entire database of units and equipment. In this way, you can model ahistorical "what if" scenarios, matching weapon platforms which never actually met on the field of battle.

The database will be expanded somewhat, with a few new units. Martinez points out that the **Panzer General**



database is already pretty well complete, so most new units will be varieties of infantry. There has also been some consideration of adding equipment which was in development when the war ended, but that never saw battle. Dare we say it? The "Secret Weapons of **Allied General**."

Multiplayer fans will be pleased to learn that the E-mail system is being overhauled. One of the more common complaints of the current system is that it can be hard to tell exactly what happened during your opponent's last turn. In the new system, when an opponent sends you an E-mail move, you'll be able to examine a history of the game so far, and watch a replay of your opponent's last

move. Obviously you won't see units that your troops haven't spotted, but watching the piece by piece movement will make clear where units are coming from and going to. It may also teach you something about your opponent, and bring the face to face feel closer to reality.

As you can see, **Allied General** will offer you more of the same great gameplay that you loved in **Panzer General**, and give you a slicker, more refined gaming experience. Newcomers to the series should be delighted. For fans of the first game, **Allied General** should be a shoe-in. It ought to take many hours to win as the British, the Americans, and then the Russians. After that, the scenario editor should keep us happy until the next "General" comes along. Might we take to the warm waters of the Pacific? SSI isn't saying, but they have indicated that they aren't anywhere near ready to retire this excellent engine yet.

Peter Smith

... Allied General will offer you more of the same great gameplay that you loved in Panzer General, and give you a slicker, more refined gaming experience.



This Means War!

Apocalypse, Armageddon... Doom. Even though the last of these rather foreboding dates with disaster has already graced a game, the fact remains that they were originally proposed by supposed prophets and clairvoyants alike to characterize mankind's final chapter – dubiously dubbed, judgment day.

Countless movies, novels and, yes even games (*Shadowlands*, *Road Raiders*, *Twilight 2000*) have made various attempts to portray a potentially bleak, near future scenario, in which mankind must struggle for survival amidst a cold and forbidding world racked by death and destruction. In virtually every case, all of these dark prophecies depict a world in the throes of a post-holocaust wasteland. All foretell of a terrible cataclysmic event, be it natural or man-made, which has crippled modern civilization on a global scale. Scavenging, foraging and plunder are the norm. Law and order are abandoned, or at least deteriorate to such a degree that they now service a much more primitive code of conduct.

Sad visions of the future indeed, they are perhaps best epitomized by the archaic *Mad Max* or *Terminator* movie series. Elder observers, however, point to Chicken Little, the first syndicated prophet of doom and gloom, as the owner of the original copyright (aw, c'mon, it never hurts to inject a little levity into a discussion on the end of our world!).



Mad Max or Max Headroom?

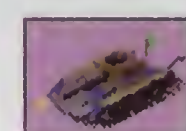
Evidently, at least for the soothsayers at MicroProse, a dash of silliness and a pinch of global destruction are just what the oracle ordered. For although the backdrop of **This Means War!**, their latest tactical real-time wargame, is set in a somewhat post-apocalyptic world, the method and means of both arriving and escaping imminent and utter disaster begins on a flippant note (hum it in C Minor for Caution). Don't expect to find the cast of Saturday Night Live delivering one liners on the bow of the Titanic as the ship slowly slips under the waves. What you will find, however, is a slightly tongue-in-cheek universe punning present day phenomena while parodying various legendary military persona.

To begin, our titanic world has been cast into a sea of uncertainty several years prior, when the world's financial institutions are besieged by total catastrophe. T-minus one year to the second millennium, millions of people lose their shirts, savings and jobs as the world's stock markets take a triple gainer into the Olympic-sized pool of monetary oblivion. Rebounding from such an economic downturn is by no means easy. If history serves as any guide, war is the usual prerequisite for turning things around and reestablish 100% employment. Fortunately or unfortunately (depending upon how you view it) war isn't immediately in the cards. Instead, the world in general, turns to computer entertainment, and one game in particular, for salvation. *Snark Hunt*, a simple shareware computer game (you see, even the name can't be taken seriously), becomes the opiate of the masses. Everyone from little old ladies to old fashioned ladies of the evening forget about business as usual in order to plug in and play the newfangled way.

Of course playtime comes at a steep price. As people soon discover, the game is anything

but, instead mutating into an encrypted agent of destruction. The Ides of March (March 15th if you aren't up on Caesar) takes on new meaning as the virus quickly infests and crashes every known computer network worldwide.

Governments and populace, Uncle Sam and aborigine alike, are thrown into instantaneous panic. Keep in mind that by the year 2001, inner space is the real odyssey. Everything from home shopping channels to national security networks feed off of computers, now abruptly taken off-line. No more ATMs, voice recorded messaging systems or microwaveable burritos I'm afraid. Talk about Doom!



Power Plants or Supplanting Power?

As the world's undernourished populace seeks to fill refrigerators doubling as closets, little regard is being paid to the bureaucrats. Governments topple like poorly designed houses of cards. New national boundaries spring up, not so surprisingly centered upon restored electrical centers and power plants. Alliances and power struggles shift like the Santa Ana winds as desperate despots attempt to hold sway over



"War as they knew it"

their beleaguered regions. In the end, several resolute leaders emerge, each dominating a particular swath of territory. This new ruling clique, again whimsically drawing their names and personalities from past notable leaders, eventually realize that real, absolute power rests with absolute control over the entire planet.

Sarcastic nom de plumes? But of course. First, there's Napolienne, who believes herself a reincarnate of the former French Emperor. A lean, mean, exotic fighting machine, she dominates the Fourth Empire, which includes most of western Europe and Quebec. Then there's Mondo Khan, a young, Schwarzenagger-esque warrior who traces his ancestral lineage to the Khans of old. The Mongol Horde, his fast sweeping mobile army, controls the vast hinterlands and jungles of Asia, from Siberia in the north to Vietnam in the southeast. Next up, Sheik Omar. Older than his rivals, he sits atop the throne of The League of Eastern Nations. His vast empire extends from the Middle East to East Africa and as far east as the south sea island chains. While he tends to deploy the latest weaponry, he rarely spends the requisite time or resources to train his cadres on their proper use (wink, wink). 'Shadowhawk', on the other hand, is an intelligent recluse who leads The Shadowhawk Battle Forces. His domain is haphazardly scattered about the globe.

Crocodile Ghandi stands as the spiritual and military leader behind The Church of Universal Siblinghood. Stretching from the shores of South America to the Australian outback and back out, Ghandi advocates non-violent methods to achieve territorial nirvana, but only to a point. When push comes to shove he'll defend his homeland like any other species on the food chain. Countess Anastasia Romanov is a bit of a mystery. "The classic femme fatale", as Katherine Lawrence, the game's story editor concedes, presides over The Romanov Pact. Her territories span the Scandinavian and old Russian Empire, runs south into Eastern Europe while maintaining a foothold in the Congo. Ruthless to the nth degree, she'll stop at nothing to attain total world power. 'Major Victory' represents the consummate American general, a comfortably familiar throwback to the forties and fifties, in the same mold as George S. Patton. Leader of

The New American Armed Forces segment of the Free World Alliance, his dominion extends from North America down into Central America and even the Carribean. Convinced that the world still needs to be saved from creeping Communism, he's one live wire the player needs to keep an eye on.

Rounding out the character credits are General Forest Walker Adams, leader of the entire domestically and internationally based Free World Alliance (the good guys!) and his able assistant Major Cassandra Clarke. The player, dubbed 'Hotshot', is placed in command of the Free World Alliance Forces deployed outside of North America and it's up to him, you (whatever) to restore the world to the new order of old (clear?).

sprawling isometric playing field, complete with all manner of miniature weaponry, fauna and structures. Play begins with each side controlling a small nucleus of units, structures and territories which are further augmented through prodigious resource and battle management. The artwork, mind you, is nothing short of awe-inspiring. Each of the building's, units and terrain features are exquisitely detailed, highly reminiscent of Maxis' **SimCity 2000**. The game is

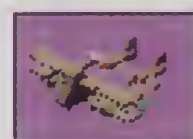
certainly not meant for the weak-kneed, art aficionado though, since combat is handled in gut-wrenching, real-time, think-as-you-blink action. Missiles and shells hurtle back and forth while digitized explosions pot-mark the landscape. All in all, clever wargamers and strategists should have a blast coming to grips with the action.

Furthermore, **This Means War!** is being designed with the express intent of supporting both modem and network play. Developed to run under

Windows 3.1, the designers have indicated that the modem and network version of the game will require Windows 95, which should have strutted out by the time you read this.

This Means War!
might wage war over a
miniatures battlefield but
shell shocked gamers
may swear it too closely
resembles the real thing.

Naturally enough, each of these villains and villanelles are motivated quite differently, possess varying degrees of military and economic prowess as well as create their own version of post-apocalyptic utopia. Therefore, strategies and tactics that meet with success against one opponent may not produce the same set of results against another.



SimWar or WarSim?

The game begins with General Adams succumbing to murder most foul. Major Clarke, Adam's former aide, informs the player of the dastardly deed then offers her invaluable services as a military liaison. It's then up to the player to deal, not only with the other regional rulers, but with the overthrow of the despicable 'Major Victory' as well. Talk about bad days!

Backdrop aside for the moment, **This Means War!** entails successfully navigating a campaign game consisting of forty progressively more challenging scenarios. Each diabolical conflict not only acquaints the player with any one of the central antagonists, but in so doing introduces a variety of new weaponry, structures, terrain and assorted other goodies along the way. Segues are chock full o' nuts, er, digitized voice-over bites of sarcastic characters just itching to scratch you off their A list. Each character is scripted to accommodate a variety of situations and dialogue dependent upon how well the player is doing. A certain amount of taunting, teasing and daring comments are exchanged with the player which further helps to flesh out the intricate game universe.

Each of the varied conflicts is waged on a



Teutonic or Titanic?

Jeff Johannigman, or Johann as he prefers to be teutonically hailed, has stood head and shoulders above his Lilliputian creation for over two years now. The mild-mannered Johann continually likes to analogize **This Means War!** (formerly known as **Little Wars**, H. G. Wells tie-in intentional), as 'SimCity goes to war.' Well, if early looks serve as any judge, then he's certainly presiding over a fascinating microcosmic case study. **This Means War!** might wage war over a miniatures battlefield but shell shocked gamers may swear it too closely resembles the real thing.

Marc Dultz



"Full scale mobilization in HO scale"



They shall beat their plowshares into swords...



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IS HELL. BUT ONLY IF IT'S DONE
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Chronomaster



DreamForge team
with the late Roger
Zelazny on a universe
spanning adventure

When Capstone first announced they had teamed with the late Hugo and Nebula award-winning author Roger Zelazny on a new graphic adventure game called **Chronomaster**, we were skeptical. Capstone have had, how shall we say it, a unique way with licenses in the past, with gems such as **The Beverly Hillbillies** revealing their prowess. We were skeptical until we heard that DreamForge Entertainment were signed up as the developer.

DreamForge, for those of you who haven't heard of them, are well respected for their line of CRPGs, mostly forSSI, including **The Summoning**, **Veil of Darkness**, **Ravenloft** and **Menzoberranzan**. This game represents something of a departure for them, as it is a more traditional point-and-click adventure game. The team's experience with the creation of a detailed world for their CRPGs shows through in this design as well, however. The game also bears the indelible imprint of the late Zelazny, who was actively involved with the project up until his untimely death. His design partner, Jane Lindskold, completed the project under the most difficult of circumstances.

The plot thickens

It all starts with an event called the Pasqua Wipeout. Seven pirate leaders descended upon a world called Pasqua and stripped it of all of its wealth, killing or enslaving all of the citizens. The

wealth the pirates received was enough to allow them to purchase new identities and eventually commission custom-designed pocket universes for themselves. It is there that they choose to live out their remaining years.

After a few years, someone begins to shut down pocket universes, and no one is able to figure out why. The Terran Regional Representatives contact Rene Korda, a semi-retired specialist in the creation of the pocket universes, and request his assistance. Through his investigations, Korda will have to travel through six different stasis-locked worlds and jump-start them with various tools of the trade. Each universe will present unique challenges because of the fact that they each have their own physical laws and inhabitants. To top it all off, restarting a universe tends to piss off the owner and creator of it, since it requires that Korda solve a puzzle of their design (it must be an ego thing).

There are multiple solutions to most of the tasks which Korda is required to complete. If he is clumsy and alerts the enemy to his intentions, they may escape and join together and lie in wait for him to make the wrong move. If he is forced to kill his opponents he may incur the wrath of the Terran Regional Representative for his vigilante style of justice.



As Korda continues his investigation he will discover a secret which will cast a new light on this

mystery. Can it be related to the Pasqua Wipeout and that catastrophe's lone survivor? In all the universe, only Rene Korda stands a chance of finding the answers and returning justice to the stars.

The game

If you're thinking, "gosh, a puzzle to unlock the world. How convenient. I bet they'll work that in somehow," then you're absolutely correct. The game puts the players in the shoes of Korda, and it will be up to you to figure out how to solve the various puzzles in each universe, many of which have multiple solutions, which can lead to multiple endings.

You will travel through the six different worlds, each of which are rendered in extremely detailed and colorful SVGA graphics. The fiction has allowed the artists and designers to create worlds which are different in any number of ways, from terrain to the inhabitants. You'll play the game using a simple point and click interface utilizing the standard mouse-based interface. The icons can be cycled either through using the





You will travel through the six different worlds, each of which are rendered in extremely detailed and colorful SVGA graphics.

right mouse button or the icons and inventory can be made visible at the top of the screen with just a mouse-click.

Corner pocket

To understand the world of **Chronomaster** and the things you'll have to do in each universe, here's a rundown of some of the main components of the game world, as created by Zelazny and *DreamForge*.

Most of your time spent in the game will take place in the various pocket universes, which operate as separate realities from the regular universe, referred to as Universe Prime. Within each pocket universe a completely separate set of physical laws can exist, all of which are determined by the architect of the universe. By manipulating the various levels of quantum probability, the architect can alter physical laws in such a manner that allows magic to exist, or can cause the laws of chance to be skewed from one extreme to the other. All of this accumulation of weirdness allows landscapes which make no real physical sense and which can be populated by strange and unusual creatures.

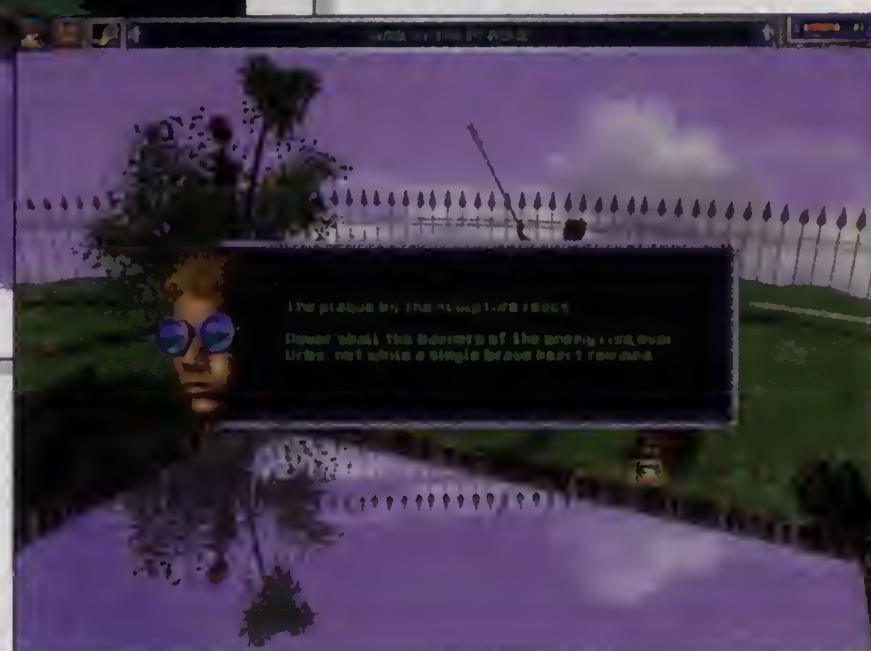
As one would expect, the ability to do this is limited to certain individuals called Chronomasters — of which Korda is one — and who don't work cheaply. As was the case with the planet builders on Magrathea in Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, only the

most wealthy individuals can afford to create their own universes, because the costs and resources required are substantial.

There is one thing each pocket universe has in common. At its center lies a control nexus which is controlled by a device known as the World Key. This device is what regulates all of the physics and variables of the artificial universe, and is what keeps it separate from Universe Prime. By manipulating this World Key it is possible to leave a pocket universe in stasis, where all quantum wave forms cease to collapse and motion stops.

If a universe is in stasis you still have a way to travel in that world. You carry a supply of Bottled Time, generally worn as a small field generating sphere that surrounds the user, and everything in contact with this field can move while the surrounding area is frozen in time. The radius of the field is a few feet, and whatever falls within the field will continue its motion. In other words, someone could shoot a bullet and once the universe was in stasis the bullet would hang in mid-air. If you were to walk in front of the bullet, the bullet would continue its flight and you would be dead.

The Chronomasters are the only people who possess Bottled Time, and the knowledge needed to manipulate a World Key. There are certain



devices, which each Chronomaster possess, that allow the World Key to be located. The Resonance Tracer is used to establish a resonance field (of course), which locates the general area of the World

Key. To establish a resonance field, the Tracer must be placed exactly on Magnetic North. The Direction Finder is a hand-held homing device which gives you the exact location of the key. Once the World Key is located, it takes the form of a puzzle designed by the universe's creator.

An important game

This project has a lot riding on it. The quality in the early form reveals that *Capstone* are serious about shedding their reputation for mediocrity and becoming a serious player in the gaming market. Just by teaming up with *DreamForge* they've done much to improve their credibility, but it is the world Zelazny has come up with that looks like the big draw. It appears well thought out and professionally constructed, with hard science to back up its conceptualization.

The credits for the program say "In memory of Roger Zelazny." If the promise shown in the story and play carry through to the final program, **Chronomaster** will be a fitting conclusion to a great career. ♦

Steve Bauman



Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

*More frantic mayhem
from Blizzard
Entertainment*

Before we begin, let's put our cards on the table. There are times when, no matter how we try, we cannot erase all bias from our reporting. The fact is, we enjoyed *Blizzard Entertainment's Warcraft: Orcs and Humans* immensely, and we've been chomping at the bit for a look at *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness*. We fully expected to be delighted by the new game. Just so you know where we're coming from...

This being a preview, we (as always) refuse to give a definitive recommendation. Too much can happen in the last weeks of a product's development for us to assume that the game you buy will be the equivalent of the alpha or beta we played. But, we will say that booting up *Warcraft II* was like reuniting with an old friend.

For those of you who've never seen the earlier game, a brief recap. *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans* is a real-time strategy game in which players have to not only guide their troops into battle, but also build up an economy to support the war machine. Peasants or peons (depending on whether you are playing the human or orc side) are sent to mine gold or harvest lumber. These resources are then used to build farms to feed the populace, various industries to create new troops, walls, and the like.

What keeps the game interesting is the constant, rapid decision-making required of the player. Back in the village, the silly peasants might get themselves all tangled up with each other, or may stand around waiting stupidly for orders. If you dote on them, though, in the meanwhile your troops may be getting slaughtered on the front lines. You never seem to have quite enough time to issue all the orders you want to, or quite enough gold to build all the troops you need.



Orcs to the left, humans to the right. Now take to the skies!



Warcraft is also kept fresh by having different types of missions, and two complete campaigns (one from the human side, and one from the orc side). When you've finally played all of those, head to head options allow you to take on a fellow veteran of the war.

All this and more!

All of which applies once again to *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness*. Everything you loved about the first game is back here, plus more. Of course, the flip side of the coin is that if you didn't like the first game, it isn't very likely you'll enjoy this one.

So what did those carefree devils at *Blizzard* brew up for us this time? First of all, *Warcraft II* now runs in SVGA mode, and it looks darned pretty. All the little critters are much more detailed than they were in the first game. The maps are also bigger. Much bigger. This makes the scenarios potentially longer. In one of the demo scenarios, for instance (*Blizzard Entertainment* sent a special demo version to the magazines... when you continually click on a unit, it starts spouting off things like "Your publication is the finest in the land!", "Remember, a good review for *Warcraft II*," and finally "Have we kissed your butt enough yet?") You can't help but like these folks), we had a chance to build quite an extensive village before ever encountering the enemy. This was something of a unique experience for us, since in the first game you were lucky to throw up a few initial defenses before

the enemy started harassing you.

The next thing you'll notice is the fog of war. As in the first game, when a scenario begins, the map is nothing but inky darkness. Sending out troops to explore the world reveals the terrain, but once these units return, the exposed terrain is greyed over. What this means is that no one is watching this area, and if it isn't being watched, the enemy can sneak up on you. It takes quite a while to get used to this approach, but it adds immeasurably to the game. You have to send out scouts and spies if you want to know what the enemy is up to. No more seeing his army leave a village on the other side of the map while all your units gather together in a defensive position. And of course, your forward observers will be cannon fodder, unless they can run back to base faster than the pursuing army.

New units, new techniques

What would really be helpful is to be able to look down on your enemy, and now *there is a way!* Yup, *Warcraft II* includes air, as well as naval, units. Airships float over the terrain, and make great observation platforms. Naval units are even more fun. Think of them as floating catapults which can hang off shore and wipe out your enemies from a distance.

In order to build these new units, you'll need new supplies. In addition to gold and lumber, *Warcraft II* has ore and oil. Ore is mined from mountains in much the same way that timber is harvested. Oil is another story. All oil comes



This series shows the progression of the orcish town. From town hall to keep to castle, their architecture just gets uglier & uglier

from the sea. First you build a shipyard, then you build a tanker. Send the tanker out looking for oil (it has a "magic radar" for this purpose), then order it to build an oil rig. After that, the tanker transports oil from the rig to the shipyard, or to an oil refinery if you've built that.



The orcish pirate scum faces off against the honorable navy of the humans

Remember how you studied the best layouts for your town in **Warcraft**? Well, forget all that now. Roads are a gone thing, so towns can be as spread out and as far flung as you'd like them to be. This is a nice feature, as you can now (for instance) build your lumber mill near the forest. Instead of carrying everything back to town hall, your peasants/peons will carry it to the appro-

priate building, if it exists. So, for example, the peasant cuts down some trees, and carries them a few steps to the mill, and returns immediately. A foundry acts the same way for ore, and the aforementioned oil refinery for oil. Since these resources can be far from town, this is yet another decision to worry over. While it's all well and good to have your foundry near those mountains half way across the map from your town hall, you also have to think about how you'll defend it.

Speaking of town hall, it can now be upgraded to a keep, and then to a castle. And once you have a keep, you can build a second town hall. There is definitely room on the map for more than two villages, so if you want to build a complete backup base with town hall, farms, barracks etc, you can now do so.

The new buildings complicate matters when it comes to building new units. The toughest requirements are those of the knights or ogres. In order to build a knight you'll need to upgrade your town hall to a keep, and build barracks, stables and a blacksmith (or stronghold, barracks, ogre-camp and blacksmith, for the orc side). This adds to the sense of discovery and completion as you finally get your economy geared up for knight building. You'll need varying amounts of all four resources to build your buildings.

By the way, don't take any of this as a comprehensive list. The *Blizzard* wizards are still working hard; we're sure there are some surprises we didn't see in the version we were sent. One thing we're told will be in the final are cut scenes and a more comprehensive story line than was present in the first game.

More challenges than you can shake a stick at!

OK, so you've completed both campaigns, now what? Well, how about you and five of your buddies getting together for a multi-player game over the company network? Don't have a network? Then how about over an as-yet-to-be-determined on-line service? You say you don't have five buddies? Then you spend too much time playing games, but that's another topic.

After you beat the campaigns, *Blizzard* offers you veteran scenarios. You can't access these until you beat the regular campaigns. Now, when *those* are through, you'll have to turn to the (ta-daa!) included scenario editor! Yes, *Blizzard* has felt your pain, and now they'll let you build your own scenarios from scratch. We can't wait to see what pops up on the nets...

Around the *Strategy Plus* offices, we've been worried while waiting for **Warcraft II:Tides of Darkness**. While we all enjoyed the first game, our fear was that the additional units and rules would bog the game down. Well, now we can all relax. The additions provide interest, and (along with the increased map size) contribute to the sheer length of the scenarios, but they do not, in our opinion, detract from the playability of the game. This is still the **Warcraft** that delighted (or infuriated) you last Christmas. Barring some major last minute snafu, if you enjoyed the first game as much as we did, you'll definitely want to watch for sequel!

Peter Smith



The humans build these lovely structures in their town center. Again, from left to right: town hall, keep and castle

OWN THE

"By tapping into the talents of a skilled Russian design group, SSI may have hit the mother lode — the Mother Russia lode, that is."

— Joseph Novicki, PC Gamer Magazine

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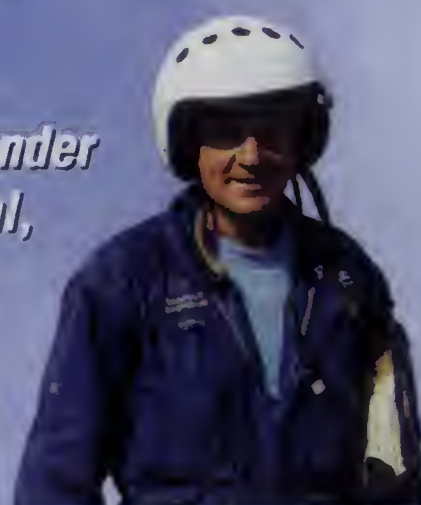
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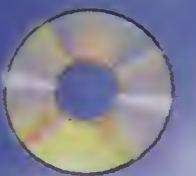
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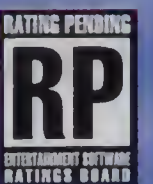
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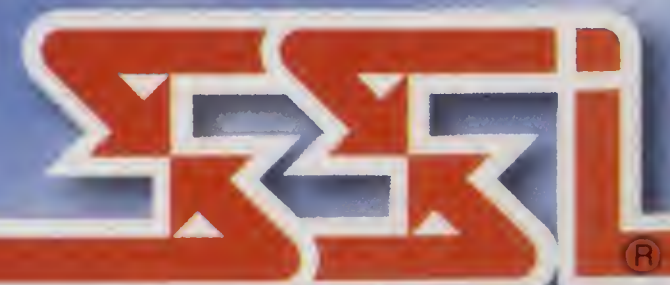
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WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON MEN



be in one of seven positions in relation to wind direction, as opposed to only five in the board game. Most significantly, the whole concept of hexes and squares is completely ignored in the computer game in terms of positioning, because ships may now move freely anywhere they want to go (one pixel equals one yard) on an unlimited playing field, as long as they maintain facing in one of the eight cardinal directions.

All of **WSIM**'s screens have been composed using *Autodesk 3-D Studio*. For all you old board wargamers out there who are used to naval games with bland maps, portraying nothing more than an endless stretch of blue sea, the computer version of **WSIM** will have powerful visual appeal. The computer map (known as the "Battle Screen") will portray the ocean in an angled view, as seen from above. From this angle there will be an apparent "vanishing point" in the distance, to give players a real feel for three-dimensionality.

We are sparing no expense to achieve a high degree of historical accuracy. Indeed, we spent a day

at the US Naval Academy museum in Annapolis, photographing old ship models from various perspectives. In the age of sail, ships were categorized in terms of "rates," from 1st (largest) to 6th (smallest), and we are making sure that the subtle differences between rates are clearly visible among the ships which "sail" on the Battle Screen. You can thus be sure that the ships controlled by the players will actually look like sailing ships and not like two-dimensional rowboats.

We are striving to give the game a real nautical flavor, from the terminology used on the game screens to the background music. A ship's attitude in relation to the wind, for example, is specified as it really would have been 200 years ago (e.g. "close-hauled on the port tack" rather than simply "Attitude C"). We have also added "tacking" (changing direction by

I REMEMBER MY FIRST GAME OF **WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON MEN** AS IF IT WERE YESTERDAY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT TOOK PLACE 18 YEARS AGO.

That day I assumed command of the USS Constitution ("Old Ironsides") and confidently sailed forth to give battle to HMS Java, a Royal Navy frigate of significantly less strength than the Constitution. The Constitution was the pride of the US Navy. In the real battle between the two vessels, which took place on December 29th, 1812, the Constitution captured the Java handily in two hours.

When the battle was over in less than 15 minutes, my opponent rose from the table and remarked with a tone of condescension — and perhaps a smidgen of pity — that I might do just a little better next time if I learned how ships actually sailed. It was not a good idea, he declared, to try to sail a ship directly into the wind.

Well, it took 18 years, but I am right smack in the middle of **Wooden Ships and Iron Men** again. Stanley Associates, the developer of **5th Fleet**, is designing a **WSIM** computer game in conjunction with Avalon Hill, and we are now nine months into the project. Unlike my first experience with the game, this time I know what I'm doing. Actually, back in the late 1970's, I designed my own sailing ship simulation for SPI, a game called **Fighting Sail**, so my deep interest in the subject goes back a long way.

One of the best selling wargames of all time, **WSIM** is the perfect candidate for computer conversion. In the early days of the project, we decided that we would not allow ourselves to be bound irrevocably to the board game. In our view, **WSIM**'s best elements are its simplicity and its ability to capture the flavor of ship-handling in the age of sail. We decided to maintain and enhance these features. On the other hand, the original game's use of a conventional wargame hexfield did not make sense in the computer format. We therefore decided to dispense with the hexes in favor of a far less restrictive movement system. The computer game now uses eight cardinal directions (N, S, E, W, NE, SE, SW, NW), as opposed to six in the board game. Ships in the computer game are now judged to



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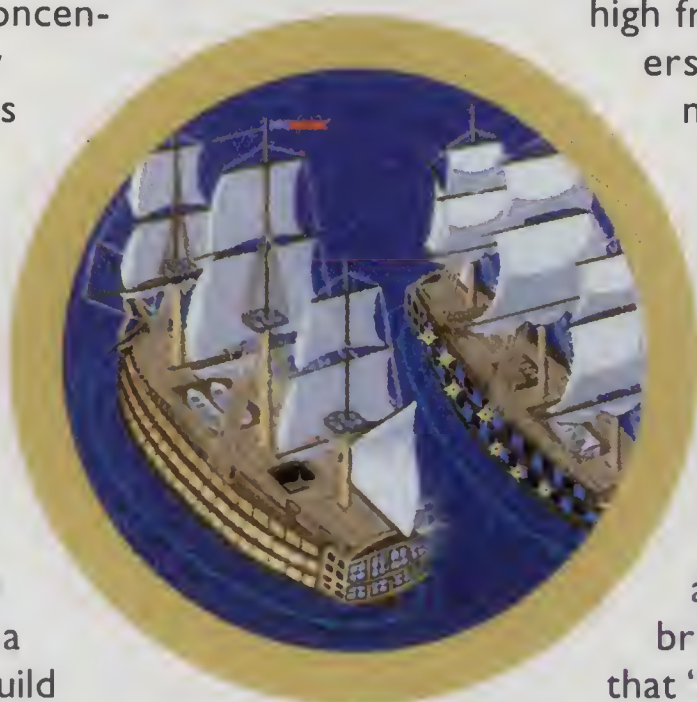


turning into and across the wind) as a maneuver, something which was not allowed in the board game.

One of the ways we improved an already fun board game was to consider what we would have done had we been asked to create a sailing ship simulator, along the lines of a modern-day flight sim. Although we ultimately chose not to portray the action from the perspective of a ship captain on the quarter-deck, we here at Stanley still tend to think of the computer version of **WSIM** as "half-simulator, half wargame." The heart of the game lies in using a ship's wheel icon to control ship movement on the Battle Screen. A single click on the center of the wheel triggers your ship's forward motion; clicks on the various spokes of the wheel cause the ship to turn to port or starboard, or to "tack," "back sail," or "heave to." One is left with the feeling that the ship is actually being controlled from the wheel of the ship's quarter-deck.

The original **WSIM** board game required voluminous record-keeping. As any decent computer game would do, the **WSIM** computer version handles all paperwork, thereby freeing players to concentrate on strategy. The computer keeps track of the crew down to individual members, including the current duties to which crew members are assigned (individual sailors may serve on the guns, in the rigging, on repairs, or on a boarding party). The computer also tracks each ship's guns and cannonades, including the types of loaded shot (round shot, grape shot, chain shot or double shot). Other records include hull and rigging damage (including the loss of masts), "critical" hits (such as fires or the loss of the captain), and wind direction and velocity changes.

Most of the historical scenarios from the original board game will also be presented in the computer version, plus a few new ones. We will keep the board game's popular "Build Your Own Scenario" system from both the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, with an enhanced database of ships from which to pick your own fleet. Our new Royal Navy database, for example, has over



sixty British ship classes to choose from. There will also be a campaign game, where you assume command of a US Navy frigate, sloop or brig during the War of 1812 and are issued orders to conduct a cruise against British merchant shipping in the Atlantic. You may, of course, accidentally run into a Royal Navy warship. If so, look out!

In my view, a prime characteristic of a successful game is a high frequency of decision-making on the part of the players, and a strong relationship between smart decision-making and victory. I think we have succeeded in both counts in the computer version of **WSIM**. Players are forced to make decisions frequently, and will rarely win unless they make the right decisions. No one likes to lose a game to an opponent who doesn't do anything right. Although luck certainly plays a role in **WSIM**, it is by no means the dominant factor. Maneuver is the key: he who maneuvers his ships best will win. But for those of you who don't know anything about sailing, have no fear — you can still win. As brilliant a sailor as Admiral Horatio Nelson once said that "no sailing ship captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy." You can do that — don't you think?

Joseph Balkoski

Era: **Revolutionary**

American
23

VS.

Spanish

Wind Conditions
Velocity: Light Breeze
Direction: North
Changes: 1 Turn

CLASS	ARMED	RATE	CREW	COST
Brig 2	3 Guns	7	Elite	3
Brig 3	16 Guns	6	Elite	6
Brig 4	14 Guns	6	Elite	4
Frigate 5	38 Guns	5	Elite	16

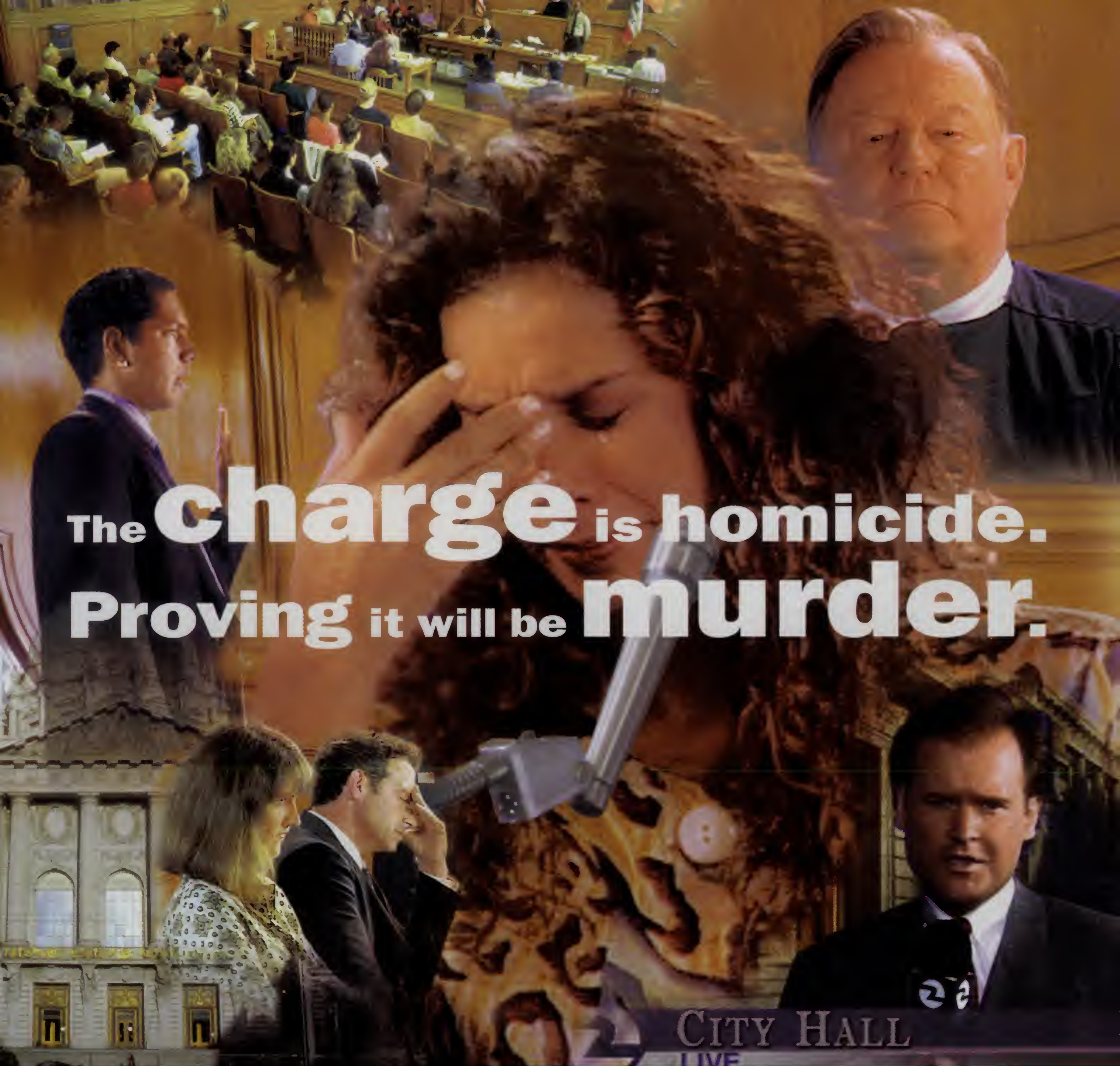
American Force Selection

SHIP	CLASS	RATE	CREW	COST
Constellation	Frigate 5	5	Elite	16

↓ ↑ Delete Credit Remaining:

Historical Background Start Save Quit





The **charge** is homicide.
Proving it will be **murder.**

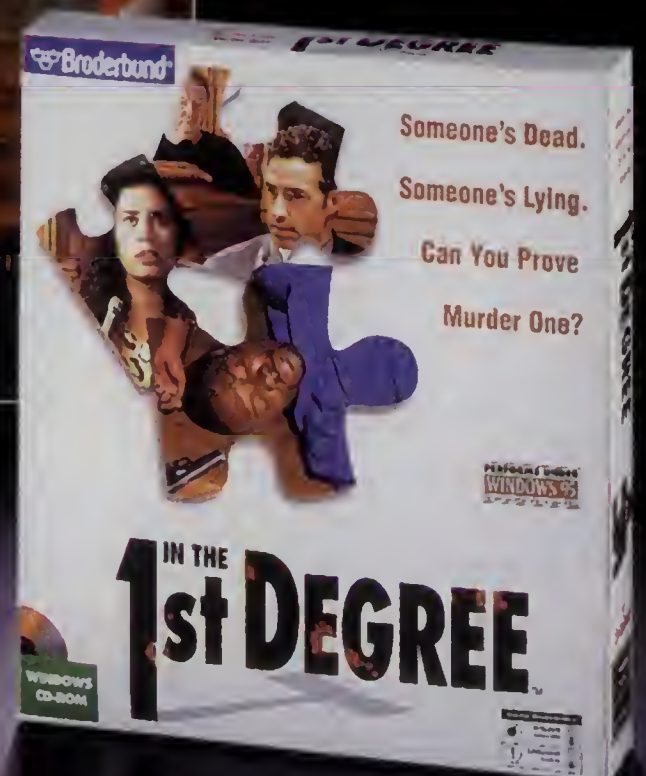
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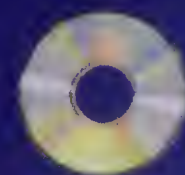
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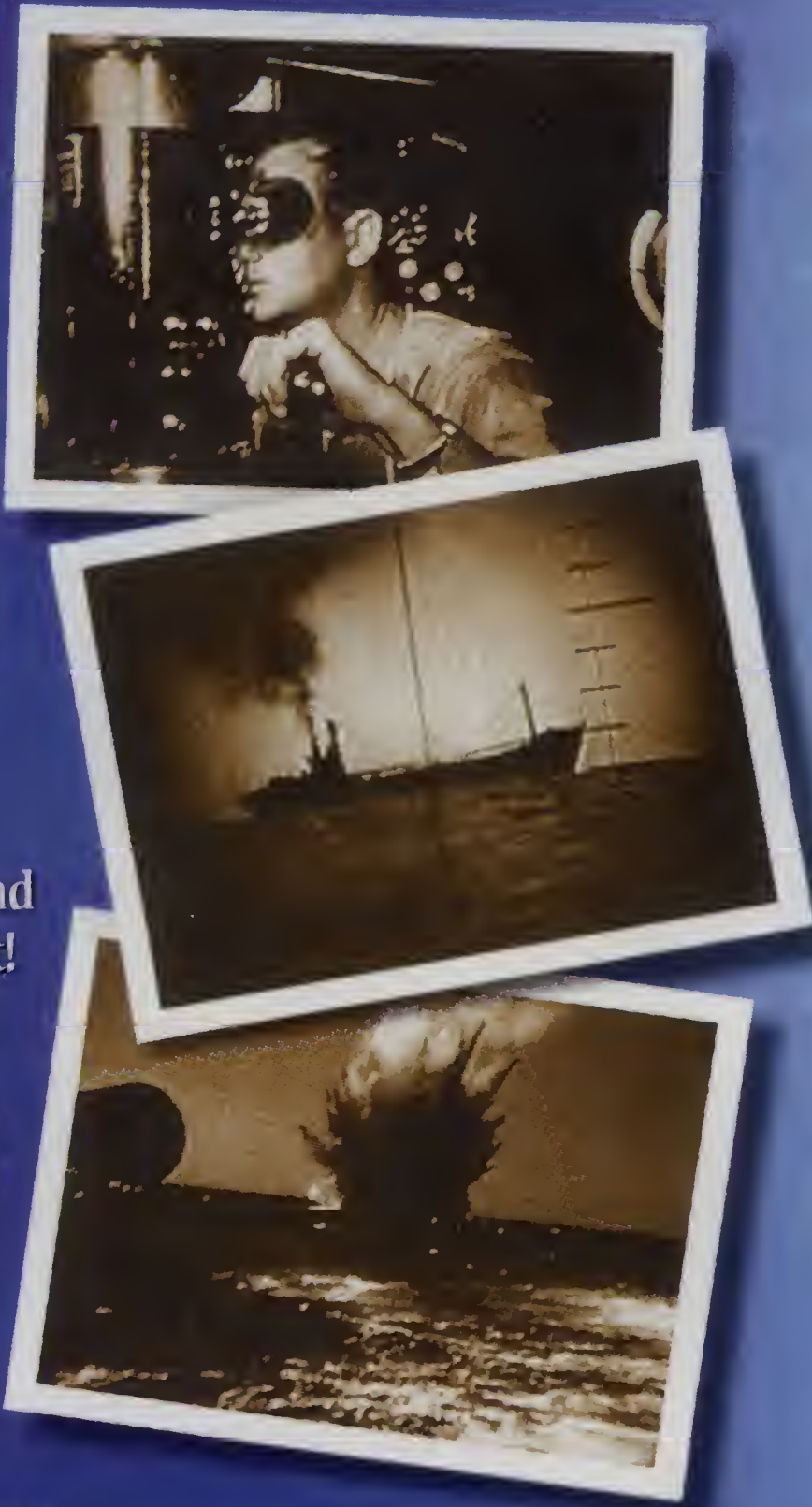
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You are going Back To Baghdad to finish the war that George Bush prematurely stopped.

In direct parallel, this program represents another attempt to "finish the job" in the area of computer air combat simulations. The driving forces behind **Fighting Falcon-Back To Baghdad** are Bob Carter, the founder of *Thrustmaster, Inc.* and George Keverian, founder of a computer "virtual reality" company. *TM* first created "state of the art" flight controls for PC's and then developed a cockpit simulator to heighten the sense of "being there." With these achievements, Bob had absolute control over the input devices and the gaming environment. To get everything to work together realistically, they needed to control the source code of the programming. This led to the birth of *MSI* and the development of **FF-BTB**.

The goal was **US Navy Fighters** graphics with a step up in realism from **Falcon 3.0**. The screenshots which accompany this report will allow you to partially judge the current **FF-BTB** graphics; at this time, only the cockpit shots are nearly final. The "outside" shots will continue to be improved from what you see here. Now, 680x480 resolution with 256 colors is standard; even better performance is planned. Later, 16 bit texture maps will allow 65,000 colors at the same resolution. *MSI* says the increase in colors will improve graphics much more than an increase in resolution. This later **FF-BTB 2.0** version will probably also include network and head to head modem play capability.

Clearly, *MSI* has advanced the leading edge of realism. With data from the Defense Department Mapping Agency, 750,000 square miles of Iraq have been photo textured in 3D. Further, every physical feature – from mountains and rivers to the Baghdad Bully's palace – is geospecifically accurate. The lat/long coordinates of an object in the simulation are identical to its real world counterpart. Your targeting photos

are identical to those used in the Gulf War, supplied to *MSI* by the same provider to the US military, *Spot Image Corporation*. From the Defense Department Mapping Agency copies of the actual charts used by allied pilots were procured. They are available for an extra charge.

When you strap on your F-16C you'll find that the flight and weapons models have been supplied by *First Ann Arbor Corporation, Inc.*, the same supplier to the USAF Red Flag and USN Top Gun fighter weapons schools. *MSI* feels that – barring the use of highly classified information – this is as close to "real" as a simulation can get. Viewing controls are similar to the USAF's Unity Training devices simulator. The system is extremely intuitive, and should be a major advance in flight simulation views. We'll know more after we see the Beta! The viewing controls are optimized for use with the advanced, programmable flight sticks and throttles.

To "X-out" the ground targets, your weapons list includes Maverick and HARM missiles, Fuel Air Explosives, iron bombs and even Tac Nukes. Air-to-air engagements can be handled with the AIM-120A AMRAAM, the AIM-9M-7 heater and the reliable 20mm M61 gun. All of this weaponry can be managed through the accurately rendered HUD. These weapons and those in the

enemy arsenal are carefully modeled by *FAAC*; weapons flight characteristics and seeker capabilities are taken from the actual systems available to both sides.

As flight lead, you'll be sent in on 7 main target areas. Many of the 60+ missions are "historically correct" sorties which were flown in the Gulf War. Enemy forces have a variable skill level; you'll do well against the lower levels. Your success will be considerably more difficult as you raise their skills to maximum. To aid in your success, *MSI* has included a first in this simulation; dual monitor display capability. With the addition of a *Hercules* monochrome card and a 9" monitor you can simultaneously display and control your F-16's multifunction display. The outside/cockpit display remains on the main monitor. The 9" monitor is the actual size of an F-16 MFD, of course!

The result of George Keverian and Bob Carter's two-man crusade for a truly accurate air combat simulation is currently planned to be on the store shelves sometime in the next few months, with a street price of around \$80. It will be released as a CD only, and is optimized for use with a Pentium processor. The simulation will run both as a DOS program and through Windows 95. *MSI* suggests at least a 60 HZ Pentium, 8 Megs of RAM, a 2x CD ROM, and a *Soundblaster*-compatible card. The SB card, and only "a true compatible," is considered mandatory because *FF-BTB* uses the SB card's clock to feed the simulation's real time clock for time-based music and game play. *MSI* strongly suggests use of the SB card for reliable game play.

The game will run on a 486 processor with 8 Megs of RAM at a slower speed. *MSI* says that most 486 users will be satisfied with the performance if they turn off the texture mapping. According to *MSI*, the key to excellent graphic performance is not in having more RAM. They suggest a high performance video card. A PCI card with 2 Megs of dual port Video Ram is highly recommended. The Diamond Stealth 64 VRAM and the ATI MACH 64 VRAM cards were mentioned specifically. No word currently on whether the next spate of graphics acceleration chips (*Glint*, *Nvidia*, etc.) will receive software support.

Does this new simulation "finish the job" in the search for a totally realistic air combat sim? Of course not! Bob and George are planning to add a four-screen projection dome over the *TM* cockpit next. Talk about virtual reality! Look for the first version in late 1996. It won't be inexpensive, of course.

John Nolan



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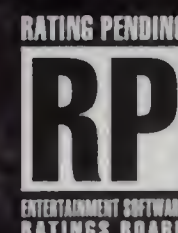
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Spacebucks

Cruising the space lanes for fun and profit.

Spacebucks is Sierra On-Line's new Windows game of interstellar trading. Designed by the good folks at Impressions (who, you'll recall, were recently bought by Sierra), **Spacebucks** puts the player in the role of CEO of a galactic transport company. Playing this role, the player sets up trade routes, budgets advertising, and dabbles in the stock market on the side. What isn't simulated is space flight from a first person perspective.

Spacebucks reinforces the impression (no pun intended) that we got from **Caesar II**, namely that Impressions has turned a corner graphically; their games are growing more aesthetically pleasing by leaps and bounds. The final product will have ample video clips and other multimedia eye and ear candy, but even the basic playing screens show a new concern for sharp graphics to convey needed information concisely.

The basic modules of **Spacebucks** consist of the galactic, planetary, and ship building screens. The galactic screen reveals a chart of the known galaxy. As the game begins, only one



In the planetary screen you'll build up your space port into a mecca of touristic delights



Here we're building a general purpose freighter. Note that we have fairly equal numbers of each cargo type (shown as the row of number across the bottom of the screen)



The galactic screen. This is where you'll spend the bulk of your time, and is the entry into other modules

solar system has been discovered. Clicking on the various planets in the solar system will make clear which goods a planet needs, and which it can supply.

Goods are broken down into broad generic categories: 1st and 2nd class passengers, and cargo requiring stasis, warm, general, or toxic storage. By clicking a toggle, the galactic screen can instead display information on a selected ship: where it's going, how much it has spent on fuel, what it's carrying, how much revenue it's achieved this trip, etc. This information provides a quick and easy way to reassure yourself that a ship is turning a profit.

Once you've decided on a potentially profitable route, you'll have to enter the planet screen for that planet and secure landing rights. Of course, you'll have the chance to negotiate with the local government (what would a commerce game be without haggling?!). The planetary screen describes the government of the planet, in the form of what it needs as well as what percentage of those needs your company is supplying, and what you've built at the starbase. Starbases can be improved with the addition of shipyards, bars, restaurants, shopping malls, and so forth (presumably, the nicer your starbase, the more you can charge passengers for a ticket).

One nuance in the planetary screen is that only two outfits can have a base on a planet. Thus it's sometimes necessary to build a minimal base earlier than you might have done, just to prevent a competitor from getting there first and locking you out.

Now that you have two starbases, you can build a route between them. This is a simple matter of clicking on the starting planet, then at every stop you want your ship to make. Of course, you still need a ship. The shipbuilder screen offers the option of buying a used ship and fixing it up, designing a new one, or modifying one you already own. The basic interface is the same for each. Choose a hull (if it's a new ship) and then add various cargo modules to it.

In addition to cargo, you'll need to add or upgrade engines, shields, and weapons. As more and more of the galaxy gets explored, you'll have the option of more and more advanced add-ons.

Now that you have a ship, send it on its merry way. Once a ship is assigned to a route it'll function without further guidance from you, scurrying back and forth between the various planets. The only time it'll contact you is when it encounters a problem. Problems often come in the form of space pirates. When a ship sees these ahead, it'll send a radio signal to you, briefing you on the situation and asking whether it should fight, flee, or pay off the bad guys. After issuing orders, you once again become a mere observer, watching and hoping your ship and cargo get away.

To maximize profits, you can develop an advertising campaign. Once your lines prove clearly desirable on the open market, you can raise ticket prices. If you see a competitor doing well, you can dabble in the stock market and ride his coattails to fatten your coffers. Of course, if he is really doing too well, you can resort to dirty tricks to sabotage his business, and drive down his ever-important CSI (customer service index).

Spacebucks is mechanically a simple game. Most game decisions are made at a fairly high level (which is realistic, if you keep in mind your position as CEO of your firm). Impressions has thus chosen to create a game which won't bog you down in the details, but will still remain challenging to play. That's a welcome decision in these days of ultra-realistic economic models which force you to worry over every minute detail. Don't make the mistake of confusing simple to play with simple to win, either. Random events will keep you on your toes, as will the pressures of your competitors.

Spacebucks makes an effort to rendezvous with the fun side of business while jettisoning the drudgery. If it succeeds, Impressions should have a successful mission.

Peter Smith

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Reader Service No. 101

TM

Fury³

Is Microsoft serious about Windows gaming?

“It was a real furball up there today, Cap! Like a shootin’ gallery - everywhere I turned there was something to shoot at. And those bions are damn good pilots, let me tell ya. We made our targets and took ‘em out, but we were real lucky not to lose anybody. At least the Bions can’t say the same thing.” So might start a mission debriefing between a **Fury³** pilot and his squadron CO.

Fury³ is Microsoft’s entry into the arcade game arena, and the game is a good first effort. Microsoft ported the *Terminal Reality* engine (used in 3D Realms’ **Terminal Velocity**) to Windows and added Windows-specific enhancements. **Fury³** runs under both Windows 3.1 and Windows 95, so nobody gets left out on this one. Under Windows 95, the install utility and game take full advantage of Windows 95 features (like *Autoplay* and *Wizards*), which make the game easy to install and uninstall. Enhancements to the *Terminal Reality* engine produce some stunning graphics and above-average sound.

In terms of plot, **Fury³** is nothing new - your standard space shoot-‘em-up. You, a member of the Terran Council of Peace, must destroy the last remaining colonies of brutal and ruthless, “bions” who threaten the freedom of eight planets in the Terran Federation.

Ok, so if the plot is nothing new, what’s the big deal? Well, for starters, it’s a true Windows



game. On a 486DX2-66 the best performance can be achieved running **Fury³** full-screen, rather than in a window. This being a beta, such things should be expected. And Microsoft did specify in the installation instructions that if you were using an *ATI Mach 64* you should run the game full-screen. This shouldn’t be an issue when the game ships.

The second big deal is what Microsoft has done with your fighter ship. **Fury³** offers “six degrees freedom of movement” on the space ship. I put that in quotes because it’s what the press release says, and I don’t know what it means. What I do know is that you can stand that craft on its tail, kick in the turbo boost, and spin it around on a dime (you’ll get nine cents change at the end of the game). What Microsoft says it means is: “The spacecraft allows pilots to freely rotate the craft in a 3D world.”

Even better, you can view the action from all different angles, independent of the craft’s movement. This means, for example, that you can start to execute a split-s maneuver and then change your view (to check your six, maybe) part way through the maneuver and not affect the attitude of the craft. Does it work? Like a charm. Windows 95 has built-in support for a large number of joysticks, from *Thrustmaster’s* to *Flightsticks*, and the game will take advantage of coolie hats and throttles.

And the graphics are super. Mountains and trees and buildings seem to shimmer in the distance and then materialize out of a mist. The motion is smooth and realistic, as though you were flying at a low altitude and watching objects grow closer and closer.

Fury³ offers players eight different planets to rescue, with a total of 24 missions. You can fly and fight near the planet’s surface, in the clouds, out in the stratosphere, and even beneath the planet surface. Tunnels lace each planet and you can garner additional points, not to mention bad-guy fighting gear, by traversing the tunnels.

Seeing as how this game is basically **Terminal Velocity** for Windows, Microsoft hasn’t invented a new or better mousetrap with **Fury³**. As a showcase of Windows’ potential as a gaming platform, they have definitely come up with something quite impressive.

Robert J. Boulanger



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Gene Wars

Is this Bullfrog's spiritual successor to Populous?

Even if the thought of a world without weapons sends shivers down your spine, you still might want to take a look at **Gene Wars**, Bullfrog's upcoming real-time strategy game of genetics and genocide. It's another design that on the surface looks quite simple, but could prove to be an incredibly entertaining and detailed combination of strategy and science.

The premise goes like this: all of humanity's weapons have been taken from them because they've proven themselves to be irresponsible when armed (duh). People, though, are pretty clever (and psychotic at heart), so they develop all sorts of new and ingenious ways to kill each other. Their latest tool of mass genocide? Genetic engineering.

The battles take place in real-time in arenas; each player has a number of specialists to help them out. They include the *builder* who constructs the creatures, the *cowboy* who's responsible for rounding up your creatures for battle and capturing other species you can mix and match with, and the *lumberjack*, who clears land for you (would it be a Bullfrog game without the ability to do mass destruction to trees?).

The first thing you'll have to do is build the structures needed to develop more advanced species. To assist you you'll have to genetically engineer some worker creatures. You build all creatures from a basic building block of genetic



material called GOOP. By crossing certain strains of GOOP you can create whatever creature you'd like, to your heart's content. The algorithms upon which the genetics are based are derived from actual scientific research, and over three-quarters of the code in the game is being used just for this simulation.

Another way to create creatures is to pick up existing ones and cross them with others. If you find a little bunny, you may want to give it giant teeth and make it the size of Godzilla. Bullfrog's skeletal mapping animation engine will guarantee that it will be animated correctly (more on this technology in a future article).

Once the creatures are created, the specialists will try and control them. As they're doing this, the creatures may start eating the local

flora (or each other), breeding, or dying off. It will be up to the player to figure out how each creature will handle the world around it. If you send out a creature with too high a birth rate, they may reproduce at such a high rate they'll end up eating all the vegetation, thus eating themselves to death.

Where you place your monsters is extremely important, as certain types will only evolve in certain regions, depending on what you've crossed them with. For example, a rabbit crossed with a rattlesnake will probably not do well in the frozen tundra. Once you build up your army it's time for you to send them off to deal with the other computer or human players (as is always the case with Bullfrog games, network play will be offered).

The game takes place in an isometric 3D view of the map, not unlike that found in **Populous**, only now you can rotate your view. The high-resolution graphics are extremely sharp and detailed. Believe it or not, this game also uses the enhanced **Magic Carpet** engine, though looking at it you'd never know it. Once you've modified the terrain, though, it makes perfect sense, as morphing terrain was always one of the most amazing parts of that game. The soundtrack should evoke memories of those fabulous 50's science-fiction B-movies.

Peter Molyneux of Bullfrog described **Gene Wars** as being similar to **Populous** because "you don't really directly control things – you merely influence the world and it does whatever it does." Despite this, the player can't just sit around and watch it go, because Molyneux also mentioned that "I love games where you suffer from your mistakes." In the end, **Gene Wars** could also be the ultimate "God game" as the goal of it is, as Molyneux puts it, "to allow the user to actually create life." And then destroy it. Sound familiar?



Steve Bauman



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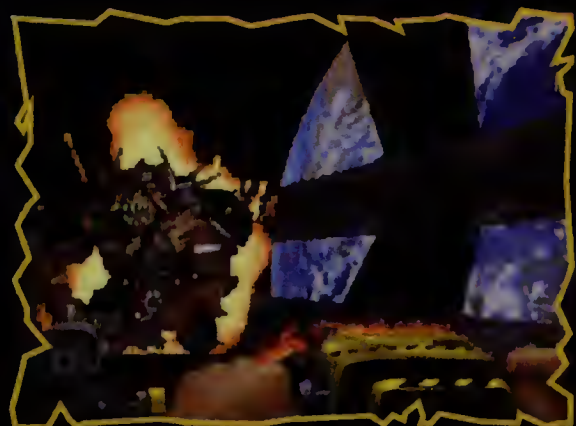
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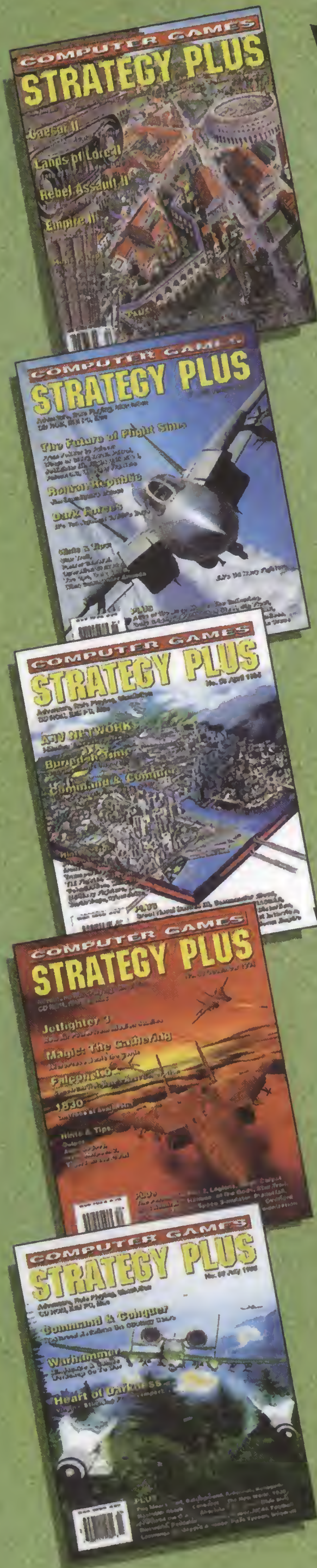
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Reader Service No. 68

Defense! Defense!

This month we'll use **Armored Fist (AF)** to set up a challenging defensive scenario, with an M1 platoon reinforced by a single M3 for air defense versus a Reinforced Motorized Rifle Company. In order to win, you have to destroy all 13 of the enemy vehicles while losing no more than two of your own.

Fields of fire

The scenario is set up as shown in Figure 1. We are occupying a position in the north, looking southeast into our kill zone. The enemy objective is somewhere off to our rear. The company commander has structured the engagement area so that we only have to worry about one company at a time (what a guy).

Once you have set up your positions, place a single US vehicle on the spot where you want to do your killing. Then switch to the vehicle screen and make sure every vehicle can see the target. Then cut the "practice" vehicle and replace it with the enemy target array. However, don't put them in that spot. Place them at least a kilometer away so that you are unsure as to when they will appear. After all, the biggest problem with the defense is that the enemy gets to decide when he'll attack.

In this scenario I have already deployed the enemy company into line with two platoons up and one back. Normally at this distance they would be in platoon columns. Unfortunately, **AF** doesn't allow us that much control of the enemy, so we have to make this allowance. If you find two up and one back too easy, put all three platoons up on line. If it is too hard, go one up and two back. In order to make it harder still, you could increase the number of enemy vehicles to 16 instead of 13.



Figure 1: Starting positions, please

After you have started the game, switch to the map view (Figure 2) and wait for the enemy to appear. Notice how terrain does not allow you to see the whole enemy target array at once. At this point, switch to your tank and hop from tank to tank until you see the enemy. (Figure 3) The US platoon has dug in. However, I don't advise firing more than two or three rounds from that position. Then you will need to back down the slope and come up in a slightly different position.

If you start taking effective fire, then go hull down. (Figure 4) All that nice dirt acts as great armor while you reload and think about where to come up next.

Hinds can be tricky in this game; that is why the BFV is there. In order to minimize the Hinds' influence, I located them waaaaay outside the battle area. There is no artillery in this game, either. If you are still having an easy time whippin' up on the enemy unit, then add some artillery to their side and/or move the Red airbase closer. In any event, the BFV should be able to take care of the pesky critters; if not, go hull down and use your machine guns on them 'til they quit



Figure 2: CONTACT!



Figure 3: Drawing a bead



Figure 4: The view from hull down

bothering you.

In this scenario it is critical to tank hop. In order to get a vehicle out of its dug-in position, you have to move them out to other firing positions. Once out, though, they go all around and it is easy to lose control. It is also possible to win the scenario with only one tank, but you have to be quick.

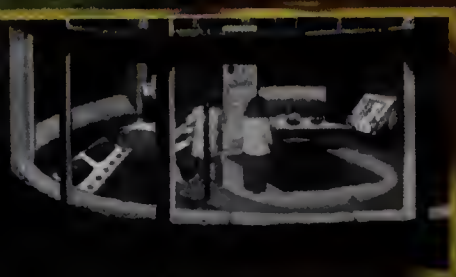
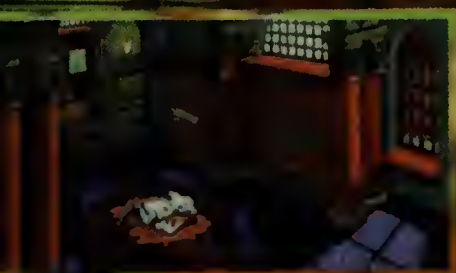
Seeing red!

Let's look at it from the other point of view as red. Now the problem is a little different. Red forces do not commonly bound around the battlefield the way ours do. Once they decide to assault, they arrive on the battlefield at about 1 kilometer every nine minutes. This is pretty fast. They orient on an objective, and once they decide to go for it, they go. This is not just a blind charge for an objective; reconnaissance drives the whole process. As I mentioned earlier, the commander designates a target followed by the rest of the company.

In this case, watch from the map until the first US vehicles appear and try to go for the flank in order to roll it up. If your casualties rise above about 50 per cent, then seek defensive terrain and try to pound him with

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artillery and defensive fires. Speaking of artillery, if you are playing the red force, go ahead and put in all the artillery the red force side will let you and keep it falling on the enemy. As we all know from WWII, some countries believed in lining up artillery hub to hub across the battlefield and flattening everything in its path.

If you really start to be successful, then hit the air button. Typically you will only see Hinds and a lot of air where there is success, don't reinforce failure.

Over the back deck

With this column, we've pretty much gone full circle. I started by discussing formations and movement techniques, how to conduct fire and maneuver, the use of supporting arms, and mines. In the last three months, I've tried to show how to use **AF** to illustrate the art of war at the tactical level. We used two types of games in the search: the first person and the multi-unit games. Both have their advantages. With the field right now, I would rate the best first person games as follows:

Microprose's MI Tank Platoon. Dated, but offers an excellent interface and reasonable graphics. It is still one of the best ones around. Hopefully, we'll soon have an updated version.

Spectrum Holobyte's Tank. Slightly newer than **MI**, it has the advantage of changing perspective from individual vehicles to units. The graphics are dated and the interface is a little clumsy, but it is still a playable game. I wish *Spectrum Holobyte* would come out of the clouds and do another tank sim.

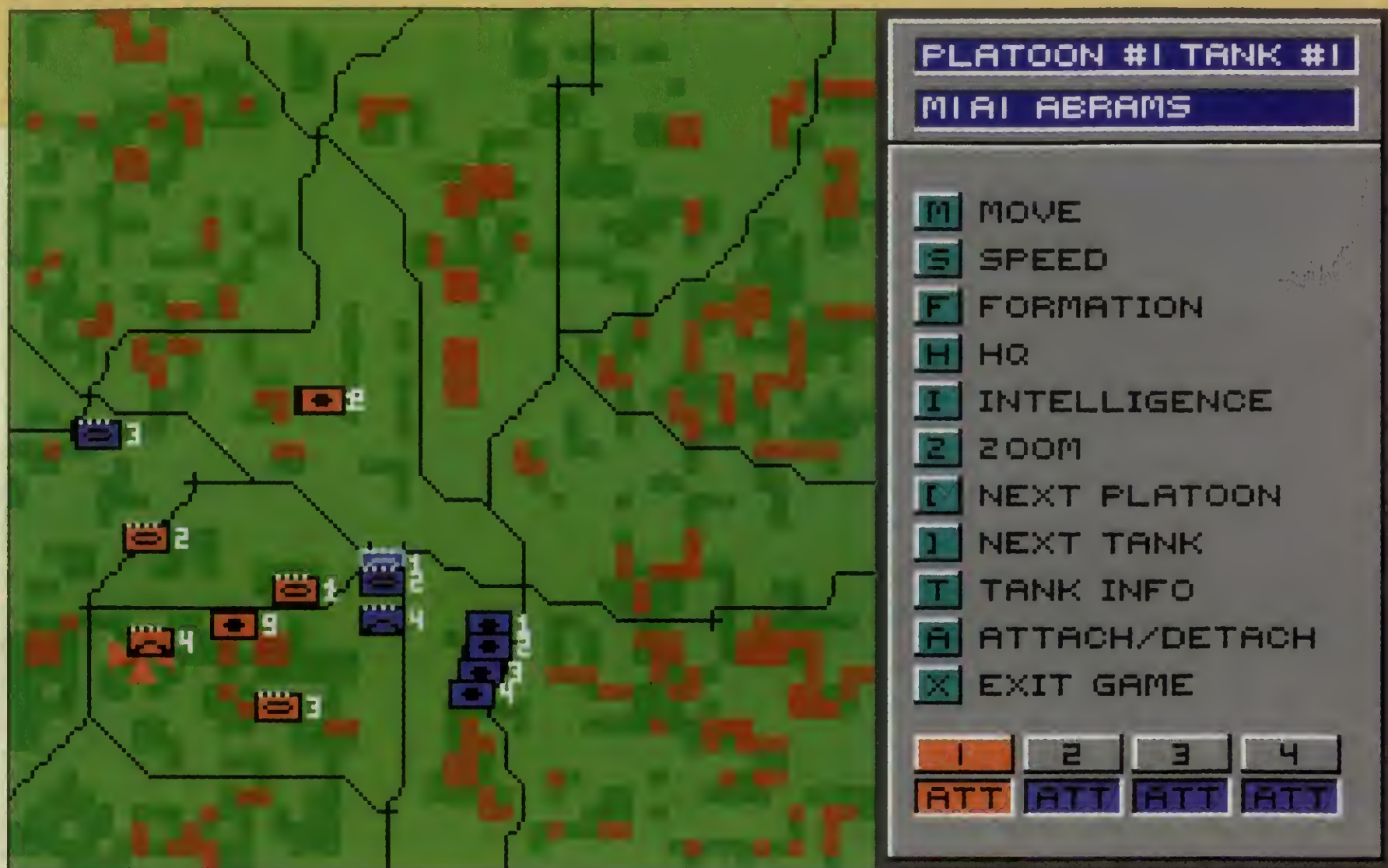
Nova Logic's Armored Fist. While more correctly an arcade game, it has grown on me. The interface is unrealistic, but does give a sense of being in the turret. The terrain modeling is excellent. The best thing about it is the scenario editor, which the first two games lack.

Deadly Game's M4. A really neat game that I haven't played as much as I should have. Excellent features of this game included copied World War II battle maps and radio reports from your subordinates.

All four of these games let you switch back and forth between the first person view and the helicopter view. I must confess, I usually play from the map because a company commander fights about 60% of the battle from the map while the other 40% is based upon what you can see. Since commanders can't hop from tank to tank the way we can in the game, you must move to a vantage point to see the battlefield. **Across the Rhine** looks like it will implement aspects of this perspective.

The best multi-unit viewpoint games:

SSI's Wargame Construction Set II: TANKS! allows the player to develop scenarios for a wide range of armored conflicts from the dawn of the tank era to the present day. It does employ battlefield obstacles, but unfortunately, they are visible to both sides. You can also buy



The platoon view in Tank

a plethora of expansion disks.

HPS' Tigers on the Prowl (even though I've not used it in the column and it did not receive good reviews from me), but unfortunately only currently models Eastern Front battles. It also allows the placement of obstacles and is slightly more realistic in this regard than is **TANKS!** Soon we should see *Pathers in the Shadows*. Its ability to use maps from *Aide de Camp* is a strong plus (if it only did modern).


These tactics will work well with other games. The principles of land combat apply to games such as *Front Lines*, which is very much like *SSI's TANKS!* in scale, despite its futuristic setting. It would also work well in games such as *EarthSiege*, *Battledrome*, or even *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans*. If you are one of those who enjoys networked **DOOM**, they would even work at that level (by the way, the

Marines are looking at using networked **DOOM II** as a training vehicle for fire teams).

Over the hill

Helicopters use much the same tactics as ground forces, but that will have to wait until I find a Helicopter simulation I can fly. Perhaps *Apache* will lend itself to that subject in the future. We may also trip back to ancient times if I can find a good ancients simulation. When **TAC OPS** for the PC is released, you can expect us to go back and consider some of this ground again.

Next we'll consider how to do penetrations, envelopments, and such. We'll use an assortment of games to illustrate these tactical techniques.

Until next month, good shooting. 

Mike Robel



A flanking maneuver in TANKS!

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Ascendancy

Space, the final front... [Whoa! Just missed a visit by Paramount's lawyers!]. Er, the conquest of space is such a classic theme of computer gaming that we look forward eagerly to each new take on it. **Ascendancy**, from *The Logic Factory*, is one of the better single player examples we've come across.

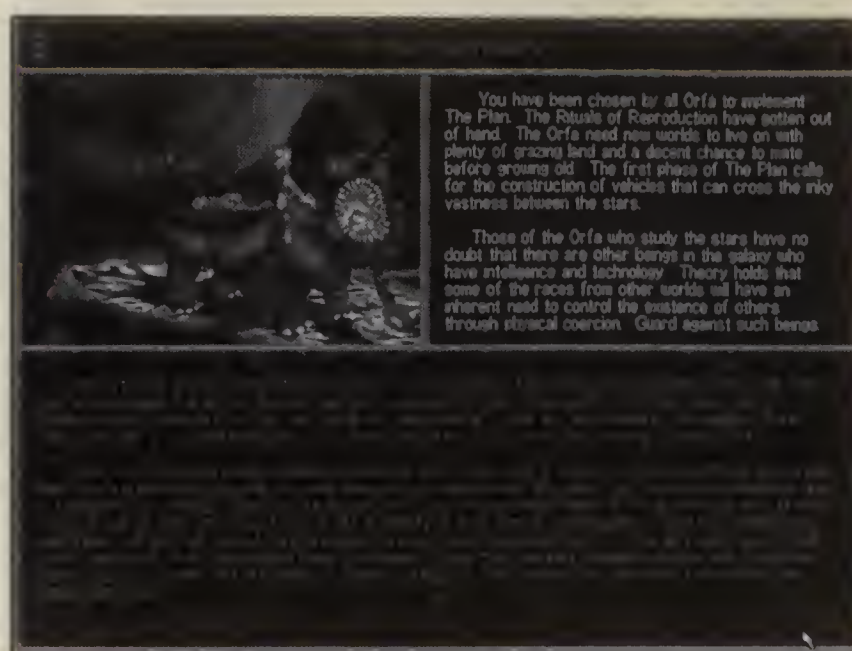
You pretty much know the drill. You start with a single planet, and build your economy, research new technologies and then take to the stars in your shiny new space ships. Yes, we've done all of this before. So what sets **Ascendancy** apart from the pack?

The first thing you'll notice are the graphics. This is a lovely game. Next is the sheer size. There are 21 bizarre alien races to choose from, and each has some special ability, making them very different from one another. Start-up options allow a wide variety of game types, covering density of the starfield, number of opposing races, etc. There are an incredible number of stars to explore, inventions to er, invent, and buildings to build.

Each star has one or more planets, and each planet has a varying number of squares on it. You'll build various industrial, agricultural or research installations on these squares, which increase your building, population, and research potentials respectively. As the game proceeds these installations become more and more powerful, and you'll also have the option of building planetary defenses. Surrounding each planet are ten space squares. In these you'll build shipyards, space docks, ships, planetary shields and offensive weapons.

When it comes time to build ships, you have full control over their design. Each ship has a varying number of "slots" which you'll fill with engines, generators, weapons and the like. Tons of various specialty items become available as your scientific community invents them.

Combat is ship to ship, and like everything else in the game, is turn-based. Combat, and all in-system ship activity, takes place on a 3D map of the solar systems. Each item's position (ship, planet or star) is pinpointed by a grid and a "height" above or below this grid. Combat consists of clicking on a weapon and then on the target ship. Depending on your ship's sensors, you may or may not be able to scan the enemy and see how powerful it is.



Just one of the weird alien creatures in the game



The ship building screen allows for an almost infinite variety of designs

Interstellar travel is accomplished via starlanes between systems. Thus, part of your job will be to map out the galaxy and determine the fastest way to get from one system to the next. Once a ship enters a star lane it is out of the player's control until it exits the other end. As you research more powerful star drives, your ships will move through these lanes more quickly. We took great delight when we were beating on an enemy ship and it dove into a starlane to escape. With our fast star drives, we followed it into the lane, passed it in hyperspace, popped out the other side and were waiting with lasers charged when the hapless ship finally arrived! Scratch one enemy!

Of course, with this many unique races diplomacy plays a large part of the game. You can attempt to trade various kinds of knowledge with other races, go to war with them, or form an alliance. Once you have an alliance you can ask for help in attacking a common foe, or ask them to make peace with a third party. Mind you, they won't always grant your requests.

The game isn't perfect (what game is?) and after many, many hours of play we've developed a wish list of improvements. The one major flaw, in our eyes, is the lack of definite victory conditions. The game is rather open-ended, and can go on for days. It would be nice to be able to shorten it up some by having a specific condition exist that'll say "You've won."

There is an option to order a planet to manage itself. As your frontiers expand the sheer number of planets under your control can become overwhelming, so this is a great feature. It could be better. It'd be nice to tell a planet "OK, just start building factories until I tell you to do otherwise" and let it go. Instead, the self-management system tends to build archaic structures that don't add as much to the viability of the planet as they might.

Beyond that, though, any problems are very minor. The catch is, **Ascendancy** sucks you in and holds you in its grasp for hours and hours at a time. When you're spending so much time playing a game, minor interface

glitches tend to really start to bug you. We're not sure whether this is a complaint or praise, though. If you've enjoyed games such as **Master of Orion** and **Stars!**, you're going to love **Ascendancy**. If you've never tried one of these "conquer the universe" games, this would be an excellent introduction to the genre. Recommended, as long as you don't mind going without sleep!

Peter Smith



This planet is about as developed as we can get it!



A small part of the research tree

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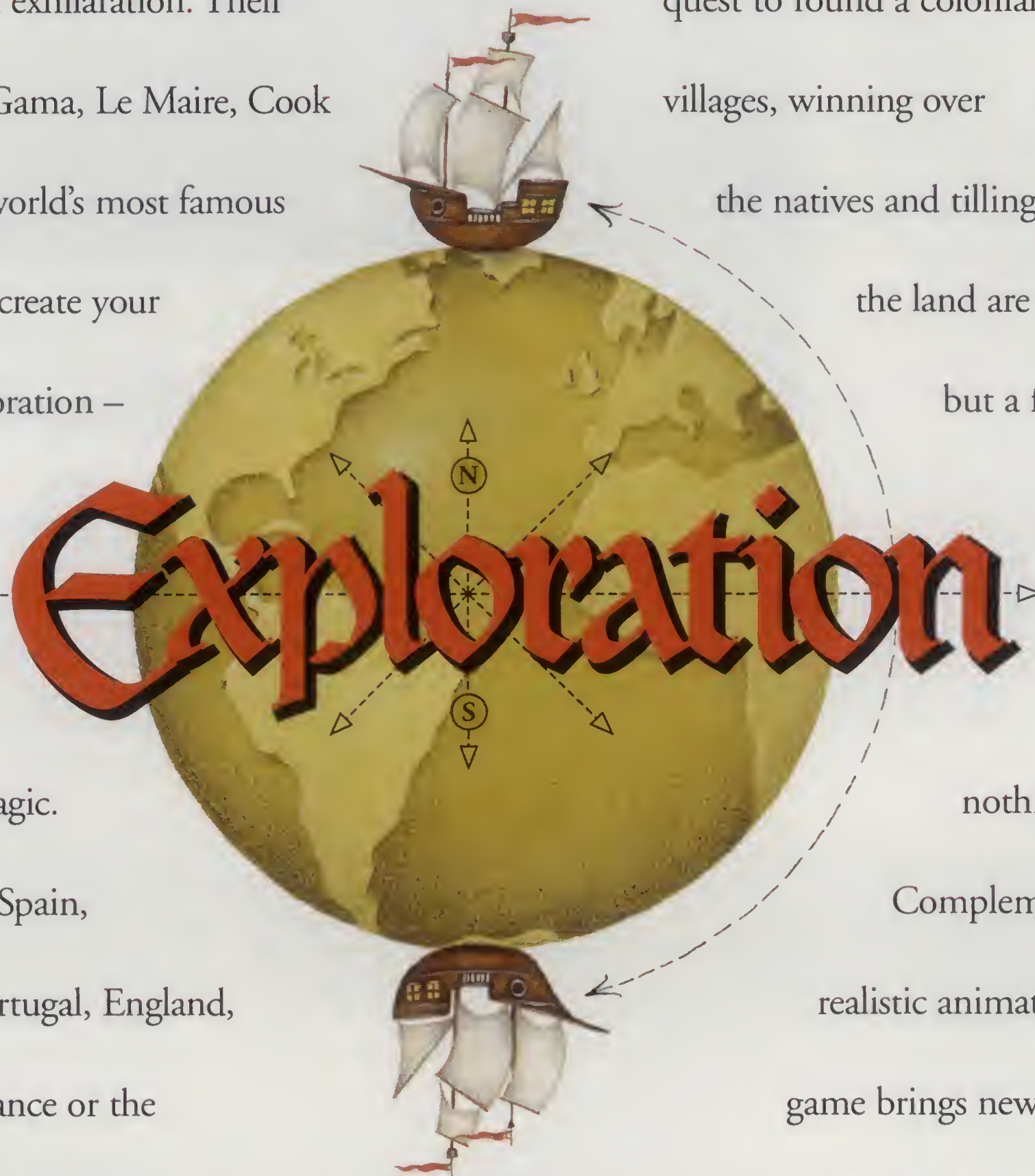
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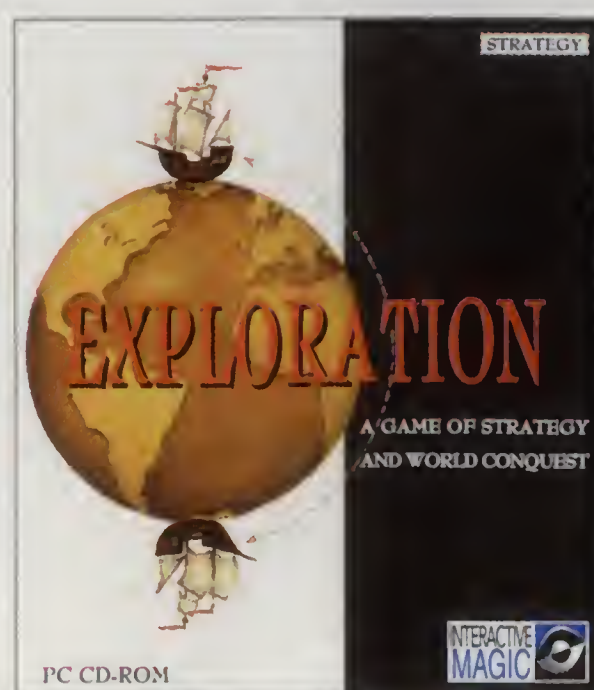
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Panthers in the Shadows

HPS Simulations, the wargamer's computer company. That's what the ads say. Scott Hamilton makes no bones about it; he's not after the casual gamer. Isn't concerned about the cross-over-strategy-roleplaying market. He wants the wargamer who has played since *Avalon Hill* released *Tactics II*.

His games are detailed, in-depth simulations of armored combat. **Panthers in the Shadows**, HPS Simulations' fourth release, is a flake off the ol' armor – expanding, refining, and polishing the gaming engine originally released in 1993's *Point of Attack*.

Panthers depicts tactical combat on the western front (and North African desert) from 1939 to 1945. The hexes represent 100 meters, turns are one minute, and units are normally platoon sized – although smaller detachments may be created to establish listening and observation posts.

The game leaves no stone unturned in its quest for realism. The gamer can model virtually any battalion or brigade level clash of the war. There are rules for paratroops, engineers (including bridge demolition), amphibious assaults, airstrikes, naval gunfire support, and counter battery, to name a few. If it happened, **Panthers in the Shadows** can simulate it.

The database, as appropriate for such a detailed game, is immense. **Panthers** contains data on over 1500 weapon systems and 2000 munitions. Most of the war's combatants are represented, including three types of German forces: Army (Heer), Air Force (Luftwaffe), or Waffen SS.

Scott feels this profusion of weapon systems, nationalities, and terrain (numerous maps are provided – more can be built) is one of **Panthers'** strong points. "I like recreating battles I've read about," says Scott. "I feel **Panthers** is a great system for 'gaming' a book."



The staff pulldown menu



The firefight

Those familiar with HPS's previous releases will feel at home. Each turn is divided into several phases. Players issue orders then observe the results of their generalship as the game cycles through the airstrike, indirect fire, counter battery, ambush, direct fire, and movement phase.

The detail involved is staggering. Indirect and direct fire are resolved by individual rounds. Such diverse elements as wind, morale, trajectory deviation, and illumination affect hit probability.

Nevertheless, what sets **Panthers** apart is Scott Hamilton's belief in the confusion of war. "If war was easy, it wouldn't take twenty years to make colonel," he says. To this end, morale and random interference – Clausewitz called it the friction of war – play a large part in HPS's simulations.

Units will not fight to the last man. Casualties cause them to break, becoming useless until rallied. Platoons won't move when ordered. There is a delay based on a unit's morale and proximity to higher headquarters. Airstrikes won't automatically hit the selected hex – or even the enemy.

To be honest, this may scare off many gamers. There are times, due to movement delays, or random occurrences, when nothing much happens during the activity phase. This is not a game of immediate sensory gratification.

In fact, sensory gratification is **Panthers'** weak point. The graphics, while an improvement over *Tigers on the Prowl*, and light years ahead of *Point of Attack*, are behind *Panzer General*, *Steel Panthers*, or *Front Lines*. Sound support is nil... PC speaker only.

By contrast, interface is top notch. To

Scott's credit, he has listened to customer's suggestions and created a truly user friendly environment...considering the complexity of the simulation. The numerous game functions may be accessed through logical pull down menus. Graphical representation of LOS queries are provided as is a pull down "staff" to help you plan.

The "Staff Menu" is **Panthers** greatest interface innovation. The menu allows the player to check the personnel, targeting, and supply status of his charge. Additionally he may gain intelligence on the enemy, i. e. where are his units? What is his intention? A clever and indispensable player's aid.

There are nine scenarios provided and HPS may release more in the future. Additionally, the game includes an extensive scenario editor. It allows the gamer to control every conceivable variable of scenario design; type and force size, training level, weather (we're talking temperature, wind speed/direction, ground conditions), morale, supply, and dud rate. The detail is incredible. However, if you are suffering from minutia overload, you can let the computer choose and place the force.

An outstanding simulation for the hard-core gamer. Casual gamers may want to check out a friend's copy first. Nevertheless, if you're the type of person with a well worn copy of *Tactics II* on the shelf, **Panthers in the Shadows** might be the game for you.

Mark Walker

Designed by: HPS Simulations
Published by: HPS Simulations
Systems: PC

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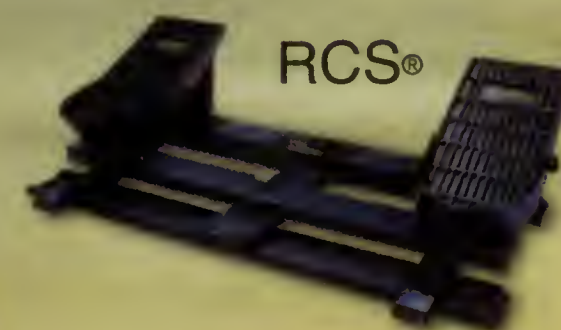
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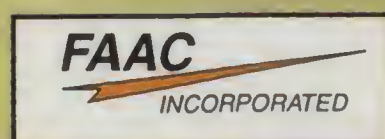
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Exploration

Bill Stealey's new company, *Interactive Magic*, has a strong lineup of titles in the works. One of the first to actually hit the street is **Exploration**, developed by German firm *Software 2000*. **Exploration** is a game of world discovery and empire building. As such, it's a mixed bag.

Exploration players can choose to be one of five famous explorers representing Spain, England, France, Portugal, or Holland. When played on an historical map, each player starts in the appropriate geographical location; on random maps, however, the differences are in name only. Each of the five countries can be inactive, computer, or human controlled. There is no provision for modem or network play. Multi-human games will be via "hot seat."

As is typical for games such as this one, at the start of play each country owns one city and one ship. You're responsible for outfitting your ship and sailing off into the hidden map in search of potential colony sites. You can build a colony from scratch, or convert a native village by attacking or negotiating with them. The latter is the best course of action. A few trinkets and you get a jump-started village as the native population starts to work for you. Once a colony is established, your task is to make it profitable by investing in plantations and mines.

Fans of this genre know how addicting these games can be. Vast stretches of time slip by as you play "one more turn," and **Exploration** is certainly no exception. From your humble beginnings, you'll quickly graduate to getting your empire started. Soon, you'll be ferrying goods from your colonies to your home port where you'll sell them for



The pristine waterfront view of a small port. Lovely, isn't it?

cash, and ferrying cash and colonists back to the colonies in order to help them grow.

Eventually you'll begin to rub shoulders with other countries, and inevitably at some point hostilities will break out. War is very pricey in **Exploration**, so you'll want to pick your conflicts with care. Loading a ship with cannons, cannonballs, powder, and enough food and water to give the ship a decent range leaves your coffers empty and your holds full. Actual combat is very simple; just move onto the unit you want to attack and the results are displayed. You can hire various types of mercenaries to handle land battles.

As a representative of your country, you cannot ignore the homefront. The church must be kept happy or else you'll be excommunicated. If excommunication occurs, your troops' fighting ability drops, your colonies' production drops, and every other country will declare war on you. The church becomes upset when you wage war, let your crew go hungry, or abuse natives. To pacify the church, build chapels and donate gold to the parish back home. If you manage to really get into the church's good graces you might be blessed, which increases fighting

and production values.

So far, so good, but there are some (small) flies in this ointment. First of all, it seems the king and church are a bit hard on you. A country that claims to be at peace with yours will sometimes attack one of your colonies. If you reciprocate, the king accuses you of belligerence and the church starts thinking of chucking you out. It seems the only way to keep them happy back home is to turn the other cheek. That should be one option, but not the *only* one, eh?

Having a ship out in the middle of the ocean with no victuals is not a situation you'd bring about intentionally. But if this happens through faulty planning, the church will start accusing you of sinning every turn, even though you're doing your utmost to get those poor bastards back to port alive. This can do great damage to your reputation with the bishops back home. It would seem a single "sin penalty" would be sufficient for any given trip that ran out of food.

In all, though, **Exploration** is a decent effort. The basic gameplay is simple but highly addicting, and the game moves fairly quickly. Indeed, an argument could be made that the game lacks depth, but that seems to be a conscious design decision. The emphasis is on exploring and colony building, with warfare and trading taking a back seat. The graphics are pleasing but not really notable; on the other hand, how many new games can state their minimum platform requirement as a 386sx? If you're only going to buy one "explore the hidden world" game there may be better choices, but **Exploration** is certainly not without its charms.

Peter Smith



The bulk of your playing time will be spent on this screen. Note the world map at top left—still lots of unexplored terrain!



One weakness in the game is random events. Fires are completely random and can be devastating. There is no way to prevent them, other than the old "save/restore" cycle

Designed by: **Software 2000**
Published by: **Interactive Magic**
Systems: **DOS**

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Command & Conquer

Well, we've been waiting for this one. The hype has been building since last spring (and yes, we were part of it) and fans of Westwood Studios' *Dune II* and Blizzard Entertainment's *Warcraft* have been drooling in anticipation. So here at last is Westwood's **Command & Conquer**. Now the question is, does it meet our wild expectations?

In a word, yes. **Command & Conquer** is an adrenaline rush in a box.

Let's back up a bit. In case you've been living under a rock for the past six months (or you're new to computer gaming) we should tell you that **Command & Conquer** is a game of combat played in real-time. Not really a wargame in any sense of the word, **C&C** forces you to scroll frantically around a map, building new installations, commanding troops, and searching for tiberium (more on that later) while the enemy attacks you relentlessly. At the same time, though, it isn't *all* action. It requires some thought to come up with sound tactics.

In the near future, a new material called tiberium has fallen to earth via meteorites. Tiberium has a curious quality. It sucks all the precious metals out of the ground, and deposits them as a crystal on the surface. It then remains for some capitalistic individual to merely pick up these crystals and sell them for big bucks.

Needless to say, there is some competition for tiberium fields. Out of the dark past emerges The Brotherhood of Nod, an ancient organization bent on world domination. Kane, the leader of Nod, sees tiberium as his chance to build the Brotherhood into a major world force. Opposing Kane's plans is the Global Defense Initiative (GDI).

You step into the shoes of a new recruit on one side or the other. Unlike the earlier real-time strategy games, the two sides here are quite different. Each has a different selection of installations and units that it can build, and each campaign takes place in a different part of the world. The GDI fight is in Europe, while Nod's goal is control of Africa.

In terms of what constitutes playing a sce-

nario, you generally start with a handful of troops, some cash, and a "mobile construction vehicle." This last gizmo is converted into a Construction Yard which you'll use as the cornerstone of a base. Various installations need to be built, and each one costs you cash. Among these installations is a tiberium refinery that comes with a harvester. The harvester will collect tiberium that is converted to cash when it is returned to the refinery. In this way you'll have a constant income to support your war effort.

Now all the while that you're building your base, you're also giving troops orders to move and attack. Therein lies the tension, since this is a game where mayhem is the rule rather than the exception. Fortunately Westwood has given us an interface that is as smooth as glass.

Units are selected by "lassoing" them (and if there is a limit to the number of units you can select at one time, we haven't encountered it) and the cursor then becomes intelligent. If you click on open terrain, the selected units get a "move to" order. If you click on an enemy, they get a "fire at" order. There are certain advanced commands that require a keypress, but these strike us as strictly optional, and many players will never use them.

Any flaws we have to report are minor. First, the AI can sometimes act a bit dense. If you want to move a unit a long distance, you're better off doing it in short hops, lest it decide to take the long way around an obstacle. Second, since the view is oblique, there are times when a unit is hidden behind a tree or building briefly. Third, your troops will often drop to their bellies and crawl when they come under fire. This is normally well and good, but when a harvester is heading for them (harvesters have no offensive abilities, but can and do squish infantry quite nicely!) you'd like to be able to order them to stand up and *RUN*, for pity's sake!

After you've played both campaigns, there are multi-player options to explore. Two players can go head to head via serial cable or modem, and four can play over a network.



There are specially designed multi-player scenarios, and some special rules as well. For instance, you can choose to have the battlefield littered with crates that contain various toys of destruction, including those normally used by the opposing side.

Everything about this game shouts quality. The sound effects, using digital audio, are superb. The music has a pulsing techno-beat which fits the game perfectly. The sound options menu has a CD player-like interface that allows you to choose which music cuts you want to hear, and in what order! The storyline is solid and involving, and is told via many mini-movies that mix rendered and digitized video footage. Game play is totally intense. Heck, even the install program is cool!

If you absolutely hate real time games, you may be excused. All the rest of you, though, get out there and check this game out. We seriously doubt you'll be sorry you did. Westwood has really raised the bar with this one, but they aren't standing still. They've already announced **Command & Conquer 2:Tiberian Sun**. The battle continues!

Peter Smith

Designed by: **Westwood Studios**
Published by: **Virgin**
Platform: **DOS**



Total carnage, Command & Conquer style... who needs VGA?



An early Nod mission is to capture this prison camp



An advanced Nod base, with all of the accoutrements of terror



A stealth tank attacks the GDI base, with the helicopters attempting to defend

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While designed for all levels of wargamers, Panthers In The Shadows is not recommended for first-time gamers without some understanding of military forces and operations.

Requires VGA display, 580KB free base RAM, 1MB high memory, 4MB hard disk space and a mouse. 2MB or more of high memory is suggested for optimum performance. For IBM PC and compatibles. Copyright 1995 by Scott Hamilton/HPS Simulations. All Rights Reserved. IBM is a registered trademark of International Business Machines, Inc.



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Reader Service No. 62

Heroes of Might & Magic

After seemingly losing their way with a series of below average products (from **Zephyr** to the legendary **Celebrity Multimedia Poker**), *New World Computing* have stormed back with the long awaited **Heroes of Might & Magic**, a true hybrid of strategy and role-playing game that works equally well as either. It's a beautiful game, graphically and aurally, and is so easy to play that any gamer should be able to navigate the entire game in a matter of minutes.

Part of the reason for its ease of use is its familiarity. Some players will notice bits of SSG's brilliant **Warlords** series here and there, but anyone who has played *New World's* underrated **King's Bounty** (circa 1990) will feel right at home. This is in many ways a supercharged version of that game, adding more depth and what is perhaps the finest interface in any strategy game.

Interface is one place where Jon Van Caneghem's designs always shine. **Heroes** is in many ways similar in interface design to his **Might & Magic** role-playing games. You can jump from any screen to any other screen via a single mouse click or a hot key. There's no wading through level after level of menus in order to find the information that you need.

You'll need plenty of information as you compete against three other warlords, either computer controlled or against another person at the same computer, over a modem, via direct serial link or over a NetBIOS network, in order to gain territory and riches. The large number of scenarios in the game each have their own winning conditions.

The player starts with one hero, a few troops and a castle. The castle can be improved upon by adding taverns, guilds, shipyards, wells and various creature dwellings. By adding these enhancements you will be able to recruit more heroes, get intelligence about your opponents, develop new magic spells and recruit the creatures that will be needed to defeat your opponents. If



We'll have to face off against some pikemen to get that armor artifact and get access to that mine

you've recruited all of the creatures at a particular dwelling you'll need to wait a full week in order for it to be restocked. However, certain bonuses can be attained that will speed this up.

The game is fairly flexible with regards to difficulty, which should allow players to customize it to their own ability. There are canned settings that affect how many resources each player starts with and you can tinker with the computer's AI a bit. If you get too good at the game, they have included the "King of the Hill" option, where all of the computer opponents will ally against you. The various difficulty settings has an affect on the final score that you will receive after completing a game.

You can play any of the scenarios for a quick game (well, they're not really *that* quick – expect several hours of play per scenario depending on its difficulty) or choose to play out a campaign, which spans eight scenarios. Once you complete one scenario, you move right on to another, and since each game turn is a day, more points are awarded for completing each scenario in the fewest number of days.

As you find treasure and win battles your heroes will gain experience, which will allow them to increase their stats. The four different types of hero have their own strengths and weaknesses, and it's extremely important for the player to know what they're facing when entering battle lest their hero be easily defeated (which ties in with the need for intelligence reports by building thief's guilds in your towns).

There are two different types of combat the player will be faced with – field combat and castle siege. When you attack a structure or another troop, the game switches from the map view to



The caravan in the upper right of the map supplies rogues. That gold in the south looks tempting...

combat screen. The troops face off on the screen, with each unit taking a turn. The computer can play out the combat for the player, but it's not recommended. The hero doesn't actually appear on screen, but by accessing the command center the player can retreat, cast spells and surrender. Casting spells and possessing units with ranged weapons guarantee victory, though you can easily neutralize a team of archers by placing one of your units within one square of them (they are easily defeated in close-combat and cannot fire their arrows).

The combat in the design is where perhaps hardcore strategy fans may be slightly let down. You cannot stack units or attack with more than one hero (though you can exchange troops between heroes). There's very little you can do to flank an opponent due to the small size of the combat area.

As someone who spent an obscene number of hours with **Warlords II** I can say that I'm enjoying **Heroes of Might & Magic** for most of the same reasons. It's so playable and immediately accessible. You sit down and get right into the game with a modicum of setup and five hours later you finally turn off the computer. It's less of a combat-oriented strategy game than **Warlords II**, which is fine with me as that game often turned into a bloodbath. Overall, this is the most enjoyable strategy game and role-playing game I've played so far this year.

Steve Bauman

Designed by: Jon Van Caneghem
Published by: New World Computing
Platform: DOS



A castle siege begins - note you get a catapult to destroy the walls



Our castle is now equipped to produce new spells, sprites, elves, and druids



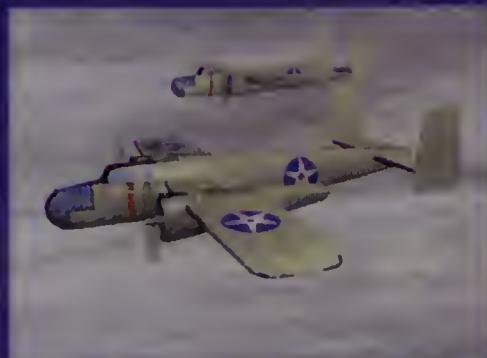
When you hire a hero they bring along troops with them - click on the portrait for their stats

Dare to enter the waters once again...
This time it's not just personal – it's a matter of life or death.

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A classic multi-award winning game is back and enhanced in this it's second incarnation – The Lost Admiral II. Strategy and stealth are required to successfully maneuver your submarines and surface ships through enemy lines in preparation for an all out attack on your adversary. Your progress is tracked all along the way with full-player history tracking. Run a tight ship, because conquering the world won't be easy to do.

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Rise of the West

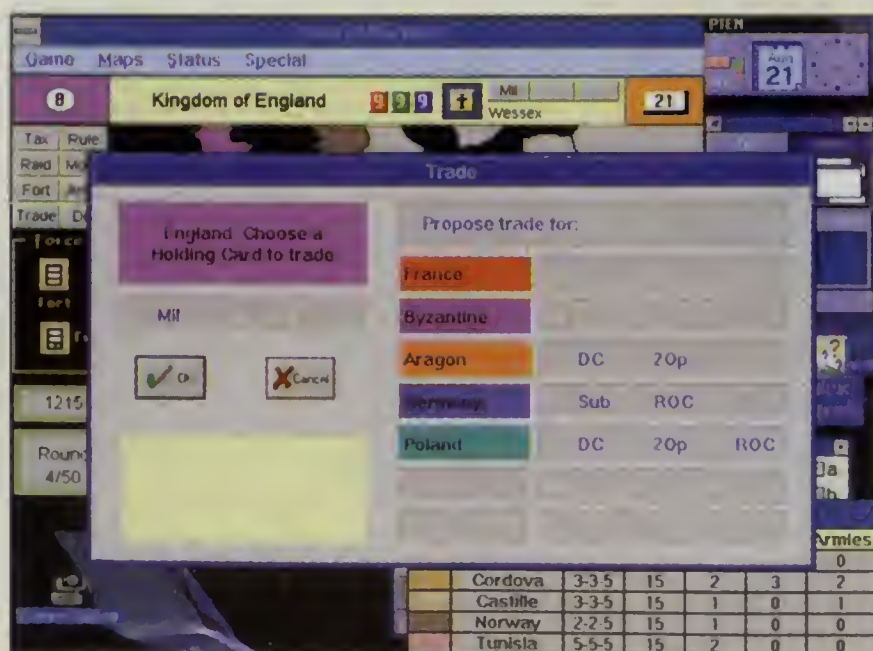
If you haven't noticed already, we are under attack. The multimedia juggernaut is invading our industry. While the benefits of full-motion-video, interactivity and virtual reality are real, what we often see when we open the box and boot up a game are a lot of pretty pictures we get to stare at while the interactive game interacts with itself. *RAW* Entertainment is part of a small counter-culture movement leading the way back to putting gameplay in before the label goes on the box.

Rise of the West (RotW) is a Windows-based game which owes its origins to the marvelous boardgame *Empires of the Middle Ages*, produced back in their heyday by SPI and designed by Jim Dunnigan, the Prometheus of wargaming.

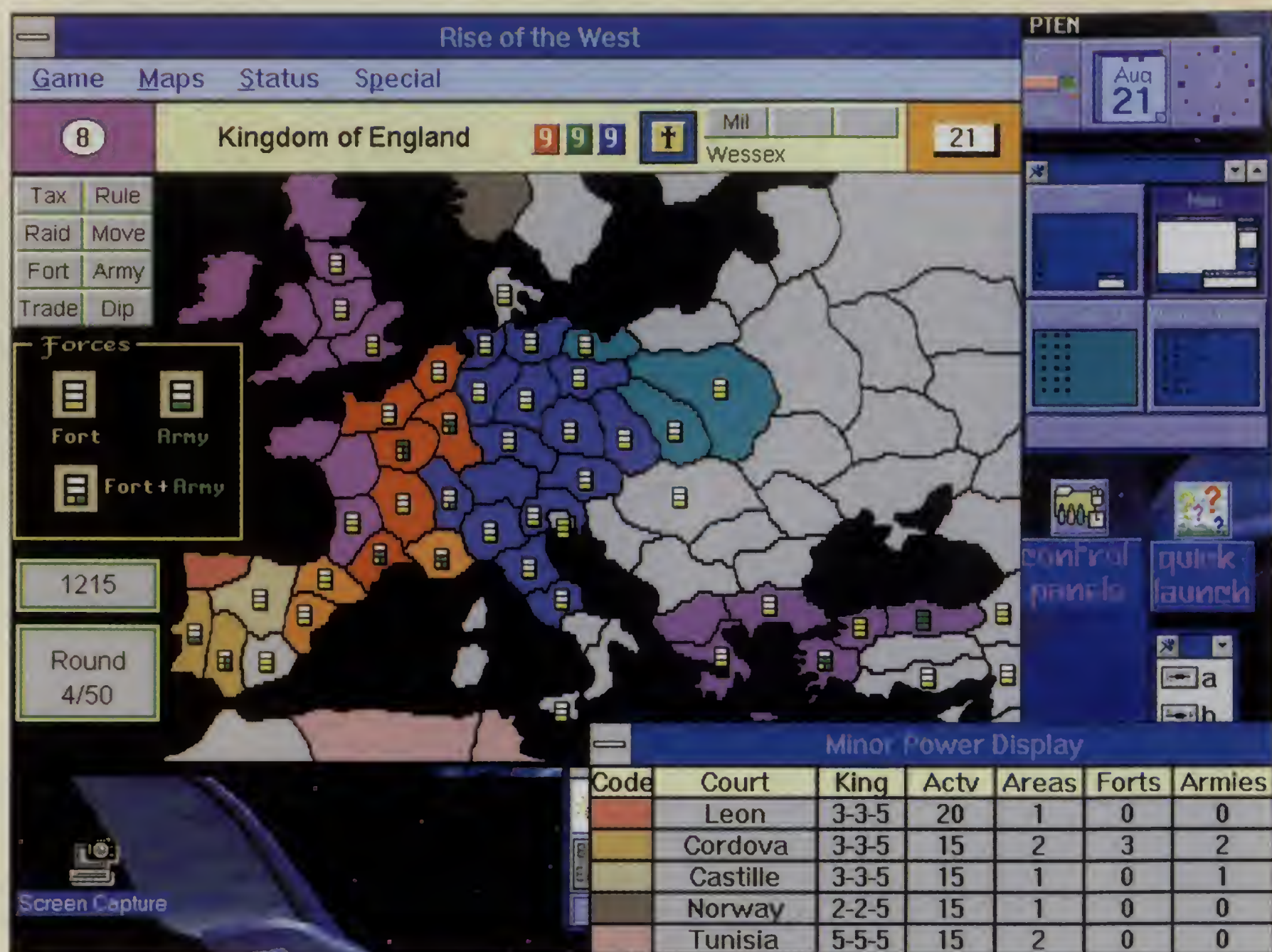
RotW puts you in the driver's seat of a major power in Europe, giving players the chance to see if they could have done any better at standing off the Mongols, keeping Charlemagne's empire together or resisting the hordes of Islam than those who came before.

Up to eight of your friends can compete with you for domination of the Old World. Any or all of the empires may be run by computer players that are ruthless if you get on their bad side.

Each turn represents the passage of five years, and each empire has a ruler whose presence is represented by three categories or statures. These statures cover military conquest, domestic policies and diplomatic affairs. The statures run from a low of one to as much as nine, though the numbers four and six through eight are omitted, making fives and nines especially valuable. Periodically, individual statures may change; eventually, the king will die. Then all statures



Players can trade holding cards with each other and the computer players



The different area characteristics can all be shown on the map, here set to display language differences

are rolled for again. High values will beget high values, for the most part; and low values will frequently stay low, turning stature checks into a tense slot-machine procedure.

Play rotates from empire to empire, and each empire may perform a number of actions (usually around six, though more operations may be bought) during a turn. The success (or lack thereof) of a player's actions depends not only on their ruler's abilities, but also on differences in religion, population, social state and language.

The map is divided into numerous areas. Most empires will start out with a half-dozen or so. Each area has a dominant language, religion and population value, all of which may change during the game, either through player action or as a result of random events.

When a player declares an action the program adds the appropriate modifiers to the proper stature, and displays the chance of success. Most actions have a cost in gold; more gold may be added to increase your chances or to decrease them, if your opponent objects.


Diplomacy plays a major part in the game. Developing diplomatic claims and ties to areas aids in ruling an area attached to your empire, and may result in outright conquest through the power of the pen. Parties in dispute over a claimed region may put the issue to a vote before all the empires.

At the beginning of a player's turn a holding card is received. Up to three cards may be kept, and players can trade cards with other empires. Computer players frequently propose trades, and may also accept your offered trades.

Scenarios date from 770 and the time of

Charlemagne to the 1500s and the beginning of the Renaissance. Not only that, but the game comes with a scenario editor which is simple to use, even without reading the docs. Having an abiding interest in the Roman Empire, I found the only impediment to creating a scenario showing Rome at her height was my own lack of knowledge regarding the small details of language, etc. rather than any difficulty understanding what to do.

RotW puts players in a position that must have been familiar to monarchs of the preceding two millennia; being overwhelmed with problems, both internal and external. There is never enough money, and for every proactive task you accomplish it seems there will be two reversals of fortune. If you are not struggling with other empires you may be beset with one of the several types of minor powers. Or perhaps there is an outbreak of heresy, or the plague. Worse still, you could be playing the Byzantine Empire and have the Mongols show up on your doorstep.

There is no sound, and the graphics are basic. No glitzy animations or digitized sounds here. In fact, **RotW** fits on one floppy, and the manual is a Xeroxed copy. What **RotW** presents, however, is many hours of fun for those interested in history especially, and an education in the many headaches that plagued rulers of old. 

Samuel Brown Baker

Designed by: **Greg Goheen**
Published by: **RAW Entertainment**
Systems: **DOS**

20,000 MEN LAY STREWN ON THE BATTLEFIELD...
ENEMY GUNS RIPPING INTO YOUR FLANK...
CAVALRY ADVANCING TOWARDS YOUR CAPITAL...

DECIDING THE FATE OF A NATION WAS NEVER GOING TO BE EASY

The Civil War



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FLEETS, SET UP
BLOCKADES, IMPROVE
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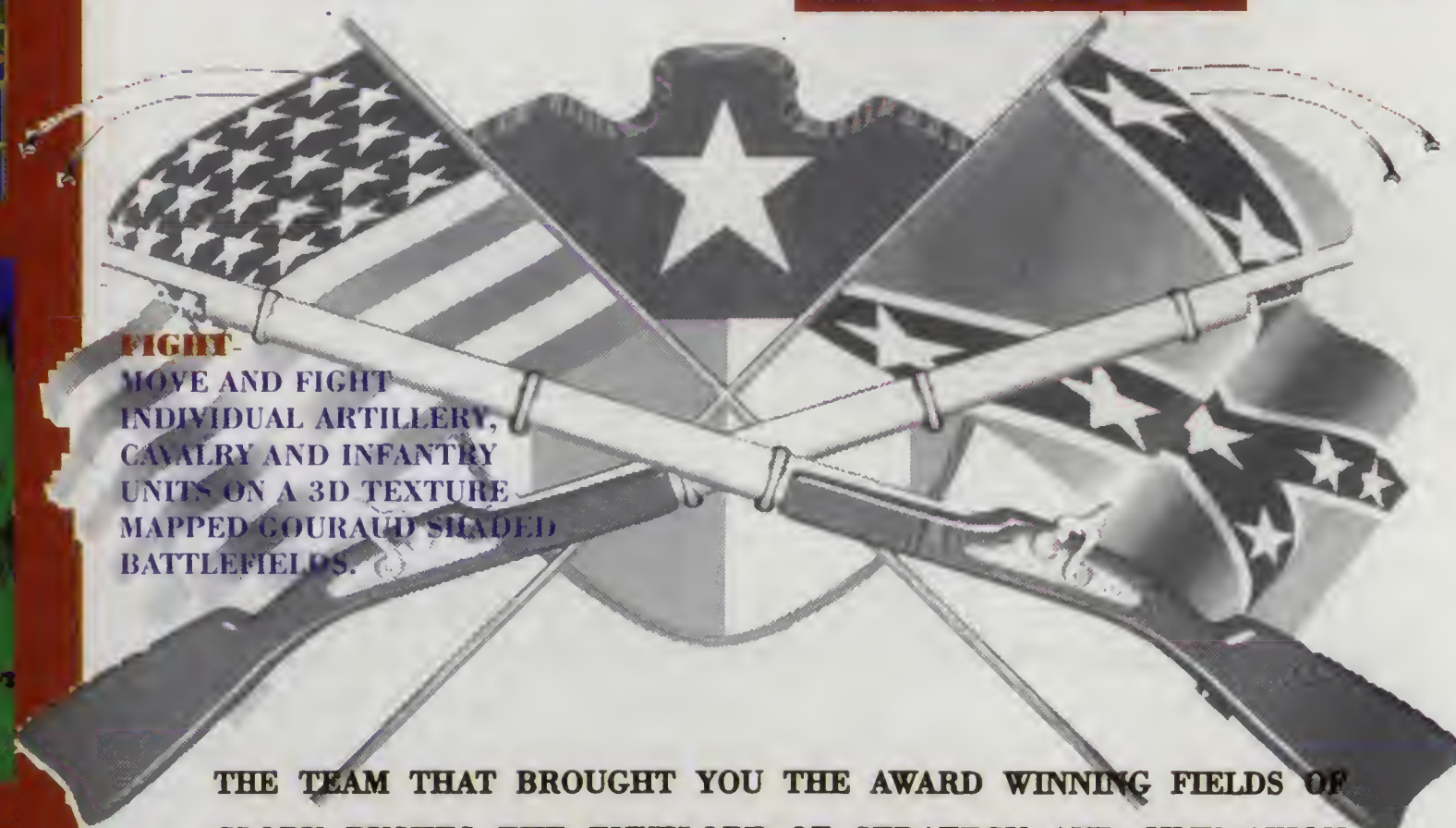
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SACK HISTORICAL
GENERALS. DECIDE ARMY
STRENGTHS AND
FORMATIONS, PUT YOUR
STRATEGY INTO ACTION.



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CAMPAIGN MAP OF THE USA
TO MOVE YOUR ARMIES BY
LAND, SEA, RAIL AND RIVER.



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CAVALRY AND INFANTRY
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Perfect General II

The Color War

Field commanders milled about the tent, lighting up an occasional cigarette or drinking hours-old coffee to occupy the time. They waited. A war story was told, a joke was passed, a comment was made, but still they waited. It was a fact of life in the army that no matter how many times you scrutinized your wristwatch the boorish act would never shorten one's wait or hasten the enemy's next move. They waited however, not for a lurking enemy to come storming across the wire, but for their illustrious leader to conduct their long delayed meeting. Finally, after everyone was just about ready to meander quietly into the mess tent for a well-deserved hot dinner, he entered. Cigarette butts were flicked into half-filled coffee cups as officers returned to their seats, stomachs still grumbling in earnest. Two hours from now, k-rations would have to do for the Johnny-come-latelys. In the meantime, there was business to attend to.

"Gentlemen, G-2 reports that the Red Army is massing troops for an all-out invasion of the Teal Islands. Now I needn't remind you how important these islands are. Many contain some of the most significant weapons production facilities we operate, including most of our secret weapons research sites. Loss of these islands can, and will, seriously impede our capacity to wage war against our aggressor. To say nothing of the fact that the loss of our secret weapons facilities would be inconceivable, perhaps even grounds for surrender. *Ours*. We can not, let me re-phrase that, we *must* not let the enemy gain possession of these islands!"

Murmurs intermixed with churning, near-audible stomach acid. For most of the assembled officers, defending an island on an empty stomach was the last thing on their minds. A hand in the back of the tent sprang up, calling for the general's immediate attention.

"What's the plan, General?"

Looks were exchanged as if the question were scripted, the act choreographed. It was. An adjutant handed a pointer to the general as if they were rehearsing for a baton pass. The general half-turned to face the map, extended the telescopic pointer, then slapped it heavily on the vertical battle map spread out before the audience.

"Here! Here's where we'll stop 'em."

The congregation's attention, save the adjutant's, was galvanized to the prescribed spot on the map where the pointer lay. Like a deft magician toying with a mesmerized crowd, the general chose his moment to perform his trick. Carefully, he dabbed away the smudge of Hollandaise sauce peeking out

EXCLUSIVE! CUSTOM DESIGN SCENARIOS



Recon map for The End Justifies the Means!

from under his mustache. The adjutant, standing off to the side, took note of the sleight of hand, and sighed.

"Some Perfect General", he mumbled, as he burped up gas from his still digesting meal.

The Color Wars Campaign

Thus far, it's been a long and bloody war with no apparent end in sight. The countries of Red and Blue have been trading blows and counterblows for the better part of a year now. Much like tired and battered boxers, both armies are reeling on the ropes ready to land face down on the worn battlefield canvas.

That is, until now.

The Red Army has managed to scrape together its last reserves in a desperate attempt to break the stalemate. Intelligence has finally learned why the Teal Islands have been so heavily defended, and why they need to be taken, *at all costs*!

Scenario #1: Beach Erosion!!!

As the Red commander, it's up to you to seize the smaller of the two islands so that you may use it as a staging area for the larger invasion. Victory points matter little, since you must control each of the four campaign victory regions to advance to scenario two. Sounds simple, eh? Well, the catch here is that you must control every single VP hex. Lose control of just one and you're up for a court martial!

As the Blue commander, you don't need to worry about victory points. Retain just one of the campaign region hexes at game's end and you'll be proclaimed the victor.

Scenario #2: The End Justifies the Means!


As the Red commander, your forces must now steal their way onto the tips of the large-

er island, then fight their way inland to the weapons installation. The aircraft carriers have been damaged in the earlier assault, so your only help comes from the distant battleships standing off-shore. Along the way, you'll be challenged by several dozen fortifications, minefields, fixed gun emplacements and a host of enemy troops just itching for a fight. After all, they've been sun tanning themselves long enough!

As the Blue commander, you must deny Red control of the Trinity secret weapons facility, *at all costs*! Even if Red does manage to secure the site, you can still win by retaking the facility. Good luck, and whatever you do, don't drop the bomb!

The road to war

To play these custom designed scenarios, copy all of the .IDX, .RCN, .SCN and .CMP files from the **Perfect General II** subdirectory (found on the CD) onto your hard drive and into the SCEN subdirectory of **Perfect General II**.

Many thanks to the staff at QQP for allowing *Strategy Plus* magazine full rights to produce these custom designed scenarios. 

Marc Dultz



Recon map for Beach Erosion!!!

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Celtic Tales: Balor of the Evil Eye

Or, what Yeats never told you about Old Eire

Battles



Runaway! Runaway! an uneven battle



A fair fight



Ugh, I thought Ireland was supposed to be green!
(highlighted area shows movement range of selected champion)

Koei have always combined strategy and adventure with a dash of role-playing. Their latest offering, **Celtic Tales: Balor of the Evil Eye (Balor)** abandons the realm of Asian history (and EGA graphics) for that of 16 color VGA European legends. Set in Celtic Ireland, **Balor** follows Koei's typical format; you have to consolidate, expand, and conquer in roughly that order. Your foe this time is the evil tribe of the Fomors, led by the even nastier (and uglier) Balor, whose cursed eye casts deadly spells upon his enemies. Starting with only a handful of heroes and a small plot of the Emerald Isle, your job is to unite Ireland, defeat the Fomors, and ultimately kill Balor himself. To keep your Irish eyes a-smiling (and bring tears to Balor's malevolent ocular), you'll have to start off on the right foot. Successful play at the beginning of the game will pay off in victory; early mistakes will prevent you from ever rising from the bogs.

Like many resource management games, there is a snowball effect in **Balor**. Well-managed territories become powerhouses, while those that fail to develop early remain weak. Constant attention to the development of lands and champions early in the game will thus make the endgame that much easier.

Here we take a look at **Balor**, the early years. Your initial choice of leader and tribe is important. Leaders come with two to eight champions and from one to three provinces. Most are good choices, though Sinnan Og's Falias tribe and Lugh's Rodruban are quite weak. If you go for just one province, choose a leader like Finn, who brings eight champions with him. If you want more territory, Mebd and Angus Og make decent choices, as do Manannan and Morrigan. Putting your back to the sea like Angus protects your flanks; putting your champions in the middle of virgin territory like Finn aids in rapid expansion. Otherwise, the characteristics of a leader don't really matter much at first.

Your starting territories will be merely adequate. Your first priority should be to improve what you have and explore the area. Bards should cast Increase Herd, and maybe Farm to improve agriculture. Other champions should build your power and culture values up towards their maximum of level 47, supported by occasional mining and lumbering expeditions.

Mine good rockland deposits (30+) and oak forests (40+) to increase your stock of materials; when your rocks look like pebbles and the trees give out, move on. Don't waste heroes tending cattle; it doesn't seem to help much.

Any surplus heroes should be exploring or training. If you can't do everything, explore first, build second and gather resources last.

Developing your starting provinces not only provides you with a strong base for expansion, but also gives you the resources you will need to trade and communicate with other tribes. Nothing is free in old Eire, and even establishing relations with your neighbors will cost tribute. Grain makes a good basic currency, but cattle are more valuable, and metal is as welcome as it is scarce. Start crafting items as soon as you can spare a champion or two; in addition to increasing your champions' skills, items make great tribute and trade goods. Heroes with the Form skill make the best craftsmen.

It is more important to develop intensively early than to expand rapidly. Too rapid an expansion simply leaves your outlying provinces vulnerable to attack, and you can't afford to lose champions to other tribes in the early stages of the game. Losing battles also costs you prestige that is hard to regain. Still, expand you must, or you will never collect enough champions to punish the Fomors.

Exploration must precede conquest, so send out your heroes. Your explorers will often find unoccupied provinces adjacent to your starting location. Consider such prizes carefully. The other tribes in Eire are an aggressive lot, so moving a single champion into open land could prove a recipe for disaster. Send two or three, leaving at least three or four behind to defend your homeland.

Try to recruit every champion who visits your tents; it costs nothing, and a few reinforcements early in the game can be crucial. Recruiting is mostly luck, as you can never guarantee any particular champion will come calling. High level champions will only work for other high level heroes, so try to increase your champions' experience as soon as possible. Champions gain experience through normal tasks and fighting, but they can also gain it quickly through games of hurley. Buy spells carefully, as they can be expensive; you only need a handful of spells to win. Paying 35 head of cattle to challenge a champion is usually not worth it, either.

Other tribes are not your only obstacles to success early on. The Fomors will do their best to discomfit your plans. Every Samhain 1st, a Fomor champion will visit your leader and demand taxes. If you pay, you lose some cattle, grain, wood, and metal. If you refuse, you have to fight to avoid losing even more. Bargaining just wastes time. Fomor champions all have

strengths over 200, and are armed with Skull Crusher axes. Don't fight until you have a champion with similar stats. You don't have to use your leader, and shouldn't unless she is really good with a sword. When you have a champion over 200 strength, and over 100 in Arms ability, then become a tax protester. Winning helps your prestige, cancels that years' taxes, and wins the attention and perhaps the largesse of Domu, your benevolent goddess.

Unfortunately, the evil Fomor will also raid your provinces randomly throughout the year. You can't oppose these forays no matter how strong you are. Just take solace in the anticipation of your coming victory, and have a pint of Guinness.

Endure the Fomors, and limit your early ambitions. Time is plentiful; if you can hold on to what is yours you can always out-maneuver your neighbors for what is theirs later on. The game manual claims that diplomacy is preferable to war, but this is not true in the early game. Persuading tribes to join yours is a long-term process which requires a lot more prestige and wealth than you have in the early years. War is much easier as an early option.

There are two main reasons to go to war early in the game. One is to improve your geographic position, by consolidating your hold on a tight group of provinces with protected flanks. The other is to gain champions for your cause. Taking territory for the sake of it is unprofitable in Balor; an exposed province you cannot hold will cost you prestige and resources in the long run.

Before ordering an attack, use the map display option from the Council screen. The Council map shows you details of provinces you have communications with, and is an invaluable tool in planning your expansion. Take notice of the geography of your immediate situation. Sometimes, taking a single territory can free up champions for use elsewhere by creating backwaters that border only on friendly lands. Plan your attacks thusly. The worst layout your fiefdom can have is long and strung out, with hostile borders everywhere. The best is nice and compact, with its back to the sea (lucky for you, Ireland is an island). As soon as you get a territory with no hostile borders, evacuate all champions but one from that area and move them to the front lines. Delegate control of those backwaters to the remaining champion, and get on with your empire building.

Fighting to gain champions is very useful in the early game. Battles in **Balor** are all or nothing affairs. The winner of a battle keeps the territory and has a chance to recruit or exile any captured enemy champions. The loser not only loses the territory but also any champions captured from the victor during the battle. Depending on your power, prestige, and levels of your champions, your prisoners may decide to join your tribe. This can be particularly helpful for the penurious warrior; if you attack with only three champions and recruit two more through battle, you now have enough strength to hold the province against counterattacks. One drawback to fighting for champions is that easy battles don't usually yield good results, as the enemy just runs away. Evenly matched battles that force the computer to stand and fight are best, but risk defeat.

Likewise, if you devote your energies to



Protected by the sea, Manannan can breathe easier



Time to take Balor (council screen showing current status of well positioned player)



What a hig level Irish warrior should look like



A gift from Domu (the Stone of Prayer magic item)

capturing the enemy battle leader, an instant win will forfeit your chance to capture any other enemy champions. The best of both worlds is to attack with overwhelming force into a province which has no retreat route, such as a peninsula or a province bordered by tribes hostile to the defender. With nowhere to run, the enemy tribe will collapse faster than the Easter Rising.

As you explore and fight, expand until you have a solid core of well developed provinces, with an average of four or five champions per

province. Ten provinces is a good target for the early going. Garrison your frontiers, send tribute to everyone you can to improve your peace rating, and make items for war and trade. Train your champions, and prepare for the next phase of the game, wherein you'll have to convince the rest of Eire to back your claim for the High Kingship. If you handle the early game well, you'll be in good position for next month's lesson.

Robert Riley Mayer



Basic Spell Library

Spell	Class	First Rune	Second Rune	Power	Element	Use
Increase Herd	Bard	Astral	Fiery	4	Air	Peace
Heal	Druid	Living	Ivy	any	Water	anytime
Farm	Bard	Terrestrial	Ivy	any	Fire	Peace
Hurl Stones	Druid	Terrestrial	Ivy	any	Earth	War
Cloud of Poison	Bard	Terrestrial	Fiery	any	Air	War
Orb of Lava	Druid	Astral	Fiery	any	Earth	War

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YOUR FACE.

mk3 for the pc



OVER THE NET

Confirmed Kill - Online multi-player air combat simulation heats up

By John Nolan

There's a real dogfight going on in the on-line gaming arena. *ICI's Confirmed Kill* is challenging *Kesmai's Air Warrior* to a duel. The winner will dominate the credit cards of online "wannabe" World War II aviators. While *Air Warrior* has been around a long time, *Confirmed Kill* is just now ready to leave its protected "free play" Beta environment. This article will give you some background on *ICI* and *CK* and provide information guaranteed to ease your entry into its friendly, kill-or-be-killed arenas.

ICI began when three "confirmed airwarriors" decided to build a better multiplayer air combat simulator. Dale "HT" Addink is the Chief Programmer; he's well known throughout *AW* for the shareware utilities he created to aid in the play of that game. John "Killer" MacQueen, one of the most famous and talented instructor's in *AW's* training academy, has the title of Creative Director, and also works problems which occur on *CK's* "host" machine. Robert "Gunjam" Salinas, a principal in the *CRIS* online network and dedicated *AW*, designed many of *CK's* features. Gunjam gets the credit for convincing the group to take a chance and form *ICI*. It's looking like less of a chance and more of a sure thing!



The Zeke turning into you can do "bat turns"; extend if you can!

"Use the force, Dale!"

Dale's "tour de force" in programming *CK* was in the creation of a "force model" for the flight model of the aircraft. Most other games use a "table model." While somewhat difficult to explain, the force model is a more accurate rendering of the factors which affect the way an aircraft flies and performs.

As it was explained to us, a good way to compare a force model and a table-based model is to imagine a solar system simulation. A table model would have a simple data array, stating the precise distance from the sun Planet X-ray would be and how fast it would orbit. Simple to program and accurate enough to convince a layman. On the other hand, a force model relies on physical computations, so the sun and planets would be rated for mass, gravity, rotational



Note the heads up display; wouldn't WWII pilots have loved to have it

inertia, solar wind, ad infinitum. This results in a model that's *much* more difficult to develop, but the interplay of all the physical properties in the simulation far surpasses the "hard coded" table-based model for fidelity.

ICI used museums, government agencies, aircraft manufacturers and pilots who actually flew these aircraft as data sources for the force model. New sources of information were uncovered all over the globe. *ICI* feels they have the largest collection of accurate warbird performance data in the world. Most of the aircraft models are based on results of actual flight tests; some of the tests were flown over 50 years ago. Tests results were not available for all the aircraft so a flight model development system was used to extrapolate data. Given known factors such as physical dimensions, weights and powerplant characteristics *ICI* feels it can model these aircraft very accurately. They have taken the force model into very great detail. It even accounts for the weight of each shell as it is fired, and subtracts it from the aircraft's gross weight, altering the performance computations.

CK also uses sophisticated hit and damage modeling. Most air combat games use a "hit bubble," a simple radius around the center of the airplane, and compute damage by percentage. For example, a certain number of hits in the bubble equate to 30% damage, which reduces engine power by 55%. *CK* uses location-specific damage modeling, and hit detection



Tracers are visible from your own AND enemy guns, unlike another online game

accurate to 1mm of "game dimension." This detection branches out to "hit nodes" which damage specific parts of your plane. So if you get hit in the rudder, only the rudder takes damage and the force model will alter performance accordingly. Depending on the number of hits, you may even have your entire vertical stabilizer blown off! You can kill a pilot by hosing down the cockpit. As your gunnery improves, you may choose to specialize in sawing the wings off your opponent with an accurate burst.

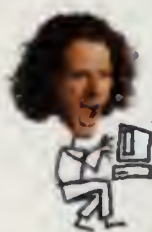


You've got the energy and position. Time to engage!

Strap on hardware of the finest kind...

From their previous online experience, *ICI* knew that the heart of their game would be the server. Without premium equipment, online play can be nearly impossible, due to delays and warping of other aircraft. They selected the *Sun Sparcstation 1000E* over other machines from *Hewlett-Packard* and *Digital Equipment*. The Sparcstation was picked for its greater bus bandwidth; the wider the bandwidth, the smoother the host/server connection. The *CK* host will run on a dedicated T-1 line linked into a T-3 "backbone," provided by *MCI*. This setup will allow much more detail than the major competing online game. The *CRIS* network will also provide a very quick and clean connection to the game on a separate, dedicated T-1 line.

On your end of the phone line, a minimum of a 486/66 computer with 8 Megs of RAM is required to get the most out of the game. The more capability you can muster, the better the graphics will be. *CK* will run in 320x200 and 640x480 resolutions on the average machine. Perhaps the most cost-effective improvement that you can make to your 486 to prepare it for *CK* would be to install a video card with an S3 864-968 chipset and 2 Megs of RAM. This type of card will allow resolutions of 800x600 and 1024x768. *Domark* has provided *CK* with special graphics routines which take advantage of the S3 chipsets. These chipsets are found in the *Diamond Stealth 64*, #9 *GXE 64*, *Hercules Graphite Terminator*, *STB Velocity* cards and several others.



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came from rookie!



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CD-ROM in this
mag!

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FROM FRESNO STUFFS THE PLAY SCREAMING
"NOT TODAY, TOUGH GUY!!!!"**



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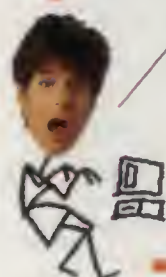


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When the sky is full of bogies, the colored ID's will help you sort friend from foe

These special *Domark* drivers can use the S3 chip's polygon engine to boost the frame rate as much as 40%! *Domark's* Bryan Walker says that a 486/66 Local Bus with one of these cards will achieve 15-20 frames per second at a resolution of 1024x768. You won't need the more expensive VRAM option on the card; it only improves performance by one frame per second over the standard DRAM. Increased frame rate will provide a very smooth video presentation and enhance your feeling of "being there." In addition, many veteran **AW** players are convinced that a high frame rate gives you a bit of an advantage in combat. They feel you can see and interpret your opponent's moves just a bit quicker. However, other players maintain that there is no noticeable advantage in having a faster machine.

It is quite possible that your input controls are far more important. **CK** can be played with just a keyboard and a plain two-button joystick. However, you'll be at a definite disadvantage. In this fast-moving, visually oriented, accurately modeled air combat sim, you'd better be able to look around, fly the airplane and manage your

aircraft systems all at once. As a minimum, get a stick with viewing controls. If possible, spring for one of the advanced, programmable flight controls. **CK** also models the huge changes in torque that occurred in these WW II aircraft as power settings went from idle to redline and back. To counter the yaw generated by this torque, a set of rudder pedals (or second joystick) is almost mandatory. To manage your other aircraft systems, a programmable throttle is very highly recommended. It will allow you to control your engine, flaps, landing gear and other important systems without hunting and pecking all over the keyboard. You'll have to be able to co-ordinate movement of your feet, hands and fingers while simultaneously processing the info flooding into your Mark I eyeballs to be successful in this environment. Don't handicap yourself with poor input devices.

"Pilots, man your planes!"

Before you takeoff, spend a few minutes on the *ICI* bulletin board. Dave "French" Chaloux, a dedicated and skilled **CK** player, has done you a huge favor. He has put together a lot of basic info and tips in a Frequently Asked Questions file. Access to this file is easy through the web at <http://www.domark.com/domark>, or you can tel-net to *ICI2.INFOHWY.COM* and look in the *pub/ck* files directory. Read it all, then reread it!

When you get airborne with all this hi-tech equipment, you'll find yourself in an arena with other online aviators. Two main arenas are available, one for rookies and one for advanced players, as well as a separate historical arena. The host will support a total of 500 players divided among the three arenas. Advanced players earn very little "score" for kills in the rookie arena, so it's assumed they won't spend much



The map: the airfields are marked by an "F" with number and country color. The lines connect a player and plane ID's to their locations.

time there, giving rookies a chance to enjoy some success. Each arena is host to 4 different warring countries with a detailed, destroyable infrastructure that needs to be defended by players using both aircraft and ground vehicles. At the same time, those same players will be trying to destroy the neighboring hostile countries. Weakening a country's infrastructure by capture or destruction is a major goal in achieving the elusive overall victory.

There is also an historical arena which will be used to recreate actual battles fought in WW II. These scenarios will be monitored by human referees, with wins determined by accomplishment of predetermined victory conditions. The first Historical Scenario, designed by Robert Salinas, will be fought in the Solomon Islands, and is slated for debut this fall. Scenarios such as this have proven extremely popular on the other online air combat game.

To hone your **CK** skills off-line and inexpensively, *ICI* plans to introduce a boxed set in early 1996. It will be a CD/WIN95 game with a street price around \$40. You'll be able to fly missions against computer opponents with an artificial intelligence "personality." You can modify your enemy's Marksmanship, G-Tolerance, Control Touch and at least 4 other characteristics. The box set will support Head-To-Head modem play and network play. These two features alone are worth the price of the boxed set. It will also include dedicated support for the next generation 3D video graphics cards. These new cards should double the resolution and frame rates of the game!

Bandits 12 O'clock! Fight's ON!

Who'll win the furball between **CK** and **AW**? It's too early to tell, but you can be sure that both games will continue to evolve. Like **AW**, **CK** intends to listen to the players and add features they request. Plans already include addition of naval combat scenarios, once the land-based version is running well. Fleet maneuvers and carrier strikes are in the making. You jet jocks may get a **CK: Korea** version at a later date.

In any event, competition improves the breed. The competition between these two games will be intense! We can all look forward to much improved online air combat in the very near future! ♦



Check the systems lights in the cockpit and the messages on the bar; you're history, ace!

*"I just escaped two poachers,
brought down a wildebeest, and
kept a pack of hyenas at bay...
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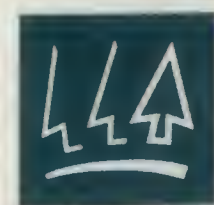
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Reader Service No. 131



Interview: Bryan Walker of Domark

By J. Grant Bell

Bryan Walker is head of the simulations department at Domark. He has logged over 1500 hours of flight, much of it during seven years in the Army. He's spent a lot of time in Apache helicopters, and saw combat as recently as Desert Storm. I had a chance to chat with him about **Confirmed Kill**, Domark's new on-line, multi-player air combat simulator. I discovered that Bryan's extensive flight experience has had a real impact on **Confirmed Kill**, which may well be the most realistic flight simulator currently in existence.

S+: When the design team for **Confirmed Kill** sat down to discuss the game, what were your primary concerns, and what was the main focus?

B: The entire project had something of a convoluted development.... It started out about this time last year as a head-to-head add-on for our **Flight Simulator Toolkit**. It was going to be called **FST Dogfight**, and we had quite a range of improvements we wanted to put into the engine. But unfortunately, the development of a new science fiction game we're working on took up all our resources, so that project had to be put on hold.

As soon as we announced that the project had been suspended, a company called ICI contacted us about licensing our engine to do a multi-player game. After discussing it with them, I found that they had been developing a game almost identical to **Dogfight**... so we got a demonstration from them, where they plugged their communications and flight modeling code into our graphics engine, and I was just astonished. Their flight modeling code was actually much better than what we had... it took in, probably, 15 times more variables than **Dogfight**, which was (itself) an advance over **FST**.

So we decided to push forward with the project and renamed it **Confirmed Kill**. We let them take



MI 24

the graphics engine and do what they do best, and we did what we do best, so we collaborated for the best possible Internet game.

Inevitably there will be comparisons with **Air Warrior**. In what ways does **Confirmed Kill** differ from **Air Warrior**?

For one thing, **Confirmed Kill** has full-screen graphics, as opposed to partial screen with **Air**

Warrior. It has resolutions anywhere from 300X200 to 1024X768. It has texture mapping – the planes look like planes, not like little gray boxes. Each aircraft has its own unique cockpit.

The Flight modeling...**CK** uses what you'd call a force-based flight model or true force model. A force-based flight model applies specific variables into a floating-point algorithm.... A table-based model is a very simple look-up table that says "Okay, at 5,000 feet at this air-speed range, the roll rate will be this, the climb rate will be this." Those models are very easy to program and you can make them feel pretty accurate, but inevitably they lack the fluid feel of a true force model. And that's one of the biggest things we wanted to do away with, the very sterile feel of the flight model in **Air Warrior** [**Flight Unlimited** is a force-based model - ed.].

It's much like if you wanted to program a simulation of the solar system. You could just map out the planets, orbiting around at a specific radius from the sun. Or you could do it the force model way, you could map out every variable – gravitational constants, mass, the entire nine yards.... What you would end up with is (A) a lot more work, but (B) a much more accurate reproduction.

What are your thoughts about graphic chrome vs. playability? More specifically, did you have to make any tough tradeoffs with **Confirmed Kill**?

Not really. We are holding back quite a bit on the graphic detail to keep the frame rate up as high as possible. Some of the other playability issues we're looking at... include the ballistics model. **Air Warrior** uses very generic ballistics modeling: the shells don't drop due to gravity, each burst fires X number of rounds, you can't fire rockets from aircraft, you can't switch between two different types of guns, you can't drop torpedoes.

Every major weapons system that was ever carried in an aircraft is being modeled in **Confirmed Kill**. Not just the generic .50 caliber and 20 mm guns, but the different types of .50 caliber, the different types of 20 millimeter guns.... Each different gun is modeled for ammunition capacity, rate of fire, as well as damage capability and even muzzle velocity, so the bullets will even fly at different speeds. In addition to that... the aircraft have very specific "damage maps." Every other combat flight simulator has what you call a *hit bubble* – they just draw a radius around the shape, and any shell that enters that radius scores a hit.... [The results of the hit] are determined by a random damage table. **Confirmed Kill** is unique in the industry in that it has location-specific damage. The hit detection is accurate to 1 millimeter of game dimension, so if you are hit in the right aileron, that aileron will be non-functional. You can kill a pilot with a single bullet if you hit the cockpit just right. There are over 2,048 of what we call "hit branches," and each of those hit branches break off into 32 different kinds of damage that an aircraft can experience. You can have the vertical stabilizer taken off, or just the rud-



Bryan Walker

der part of the vertical stabilizer taken off, and it's the same with all parts of the fuselage... everything!

Are there any aspects of **Confirmed Kill** that you think still need work, and what areas will you expand into as it continues to grow?

The thing about **Confirmed Kill** is that it's never going to be finished. Unlike a boxed game that you just sell and that's it, it's always going to have to offer something new to keep people coming back. As a result, we have quite a few new features scheduled over the next year. Initially, players will see ground combat. In three or four months that will expand to include naval combat, and players will actually be able to direct ships and man the gun turrets on those ships. Then we're going to expand into a Korean War environment, with MiG-15s, F 86s, and the prop planes that participated in the Korean War flying around.

Finally, how does someone get started in **Confirmed Kill**?

You'll need to download the base file and the current update file. Along with those two bits of software (about eight megabytes) you'll need a DOS shell dial-up capability from your Internet provider. You need to run straight through DOS, Windows just won't run fast enough. Once you run the game and get to your Internet provider, you use a Telnet connection to access the server.

Note: The Domark home page, where you can find the **Confirmed Kill** software, is a great resource: <http://www.domark.com/domark>

Also, you can get the software via FTP at: <ftp://cactus.org/incoming/ConfKill/>

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A long strange trip down the long and winding road

I got lost. That's why this column's been missing for a few months. So shoot me.

Random observations

Why is it that despite the fact I pretty much panned *LucasArts' Full Throttle* two issues ago I thoroughly enjoyed it the two times I played it for the walkthrough I wrote for it? It is an amazing piece of work, but it's not a great adventure game. Damned entertaining, though.

Oddly enough, *Spectrum HoloByte's Star Trek®: The Next Generation™* is less outright fun than *Full Throttle* and the walkthrough feels more like work, but it's a better adventure. Go figure. Besides, *Buried in Time* is better than both of them.

Of course I've been spending an obscene amount of time wandering the *World of Aden in Thunderscape*. OK, so the graphics ain't great, the colors are beyond drab, the music is a bad joke (erm, guitar solos for a fantasy-style CRPG...is that supposed to be ironic?), the automapping transcends mere uselessness, and there are a few more things I could rag on but don't feel like. But I play it. And play it. And play it. I haven't had this much fun running through hallways since *Ultima Underworld...*

Speaking of the *Underworld*, *Origin's* upcoming action/adventure *Cybermage*, from *Wizardry* wizard D.W. Bradley, looks amazing. I love the comic book art that sets up the game and carries over to the game. A bit problematic is the fact that, true to their source, the game is full of all sorts of women who seem to think a thong is the height of fashion. Not that I mind, being the sexist pig that I am, but it might alienate 50% of their potential audience.

Speaking of sexism, I had a funny chat with Brenda Garbo of *Sir-tech* where she explained that the buff stud of a dude she used to star in *Druid* (there's no truth to the rumor that he's modeled after a certain magazine editor) was her response to the scantily clad babes that have populated CRPGs since day one. Fighting sexism with sexism. Groovy.

Shovelware that's fun to ware?

Someone must like all of the various CD-ROM compilations floating around out there because there sure are a lot of them. I suspect they're being purchased by all of the "well, I just got this multimedia PC and I need something for it. Ah, I can get 15 crappy games for the price of one that's actually good. Whatta deal!" sorts of people.

Anyway, I actually found one that's actually worth the money. Wouldn't you know it'd be from *LucasArts*? You get, I'm tingling all over, the full talkie versions of *Day of the Tentacle*, *Sam & Max Hit the Road* and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. Needless to say these are three of the best reasons to own a computer. Oh, and the thing also comes with a *Full Throttle* and *Rebel Assault* demo and



Buried in Time – watch for this one around awards time...

the *Star Wars Screen Saver*. If you haven't played any one of those three adventures you are un-American (or un-whatever country you hail from).

Infocom returns, again?

Milking the *Infocom* brand has become a national pastime at *Activision*, and the latest parade of *Infocom* collections is further proof. The *Mystery Collection* includes *Lurking Horror*, *Suspect*, *Deadline*, *Witness*, *Moonmist*, and *Sherlock*. The *Adventure Collection* includes *Border Zone*, *Plundered Hearts*, *Cutthroats*, *Trinity* (one of the best ever), and *Infidel*. The *Comedy Collection* comes with *Bureaucracy* (by Douglas Adams), *Hollywood Hijinx*, *Ballyhoo*, and one of my all-time favorites *Nord and Bert Couldn't Make Heads or Tails of It*. The *Fantasy Collection* features *Enchanter*, *Seastalker*, *Sorcerer*, *Spellbreaker*, and *Wishbringer*. Finally, the *Sci-Fi Collection* includes *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (by Douglas Adams and Steve Meretzky), Meretzky's brilliant *A Mind Forever Voyaging*, *Starcross*, *Stationfall*, and *Suspended*.

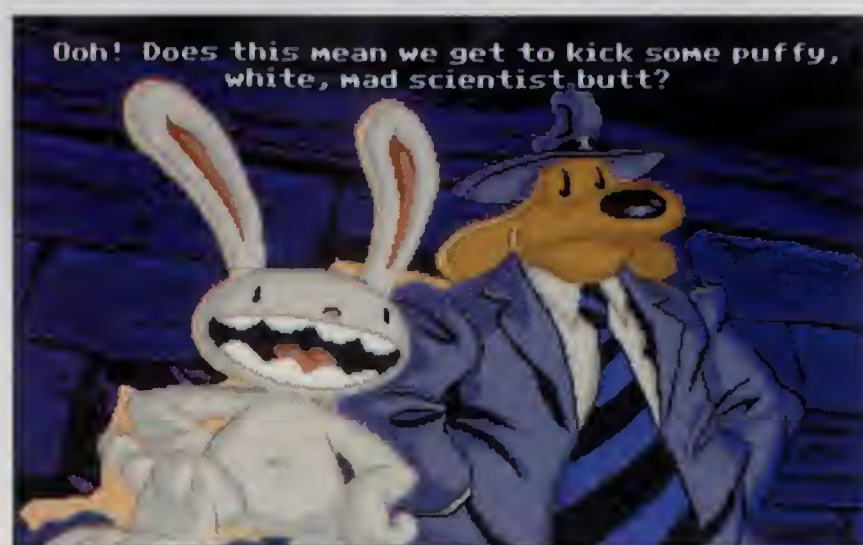
Of course if you don't own either of the *Lost Treasures of Infocom* packages or the originals then this is an incredibly cool collection of classic titles that are still worth owning. However, I do expect more of a product that claims to be "Windows 95" compatible than including a PIF file for running the damn thing in a DOS box. What about writing a new front

end for the games that allows you to switch fonts and colors? Ah, what do I know. Maybe no one wants to play these games anymore?

Which isn't true. I received an e-mail from someone who was apparently distraught that I'd given the ending of *Planetfall* away a few months ago. As if the whole world didn't know that Floyd died at the end? Oh, and by the way, Darth Vader is Luke's father, the girl in *The Crying Game* is a guy, OJ Simpson is guilty and Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin are the names of bands, not people in them. OK? Got that?

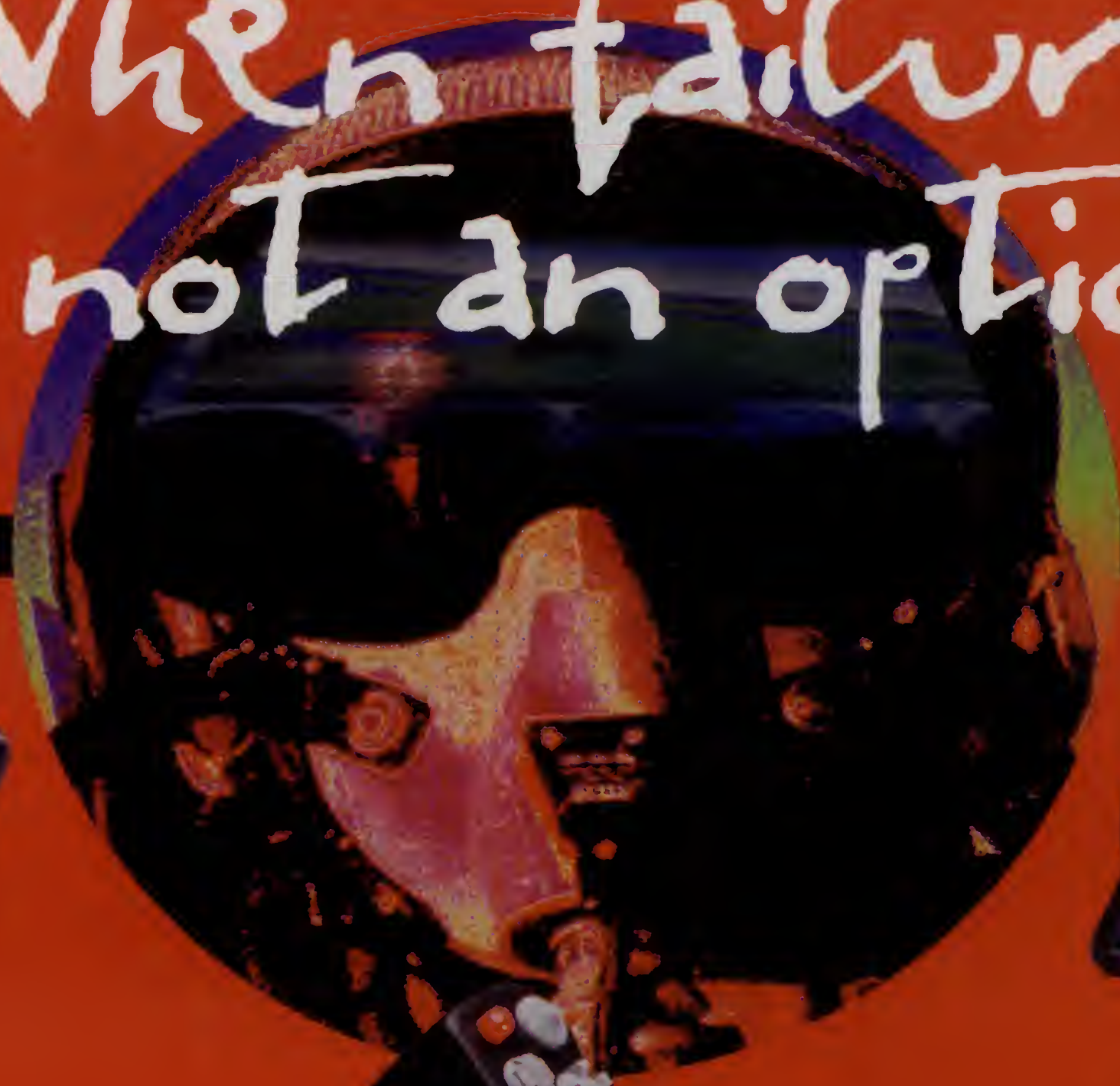
And finally, thanks to all one of you who wrote in and said that you missed this column. It warmed my heart to think that I was at least reaching one person in the world. Oh, and the score right now in the "best TV band" is *Partridge Family* - 1, *Brady Kids* - 0. Keep sending your votes to us at any of our e-mail addresses...

◆ Steve Bauman



Sam & Max – did I mention in this issue that this game is brilliant?

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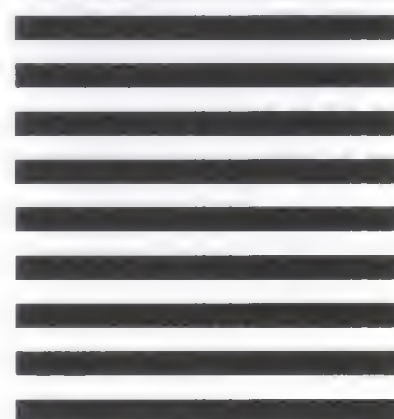
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Phantasmagoria

What summer release was delayed, had numerous re-shoots, costed more money than you made this year (and maybe your whole career), and is completely waterlogged? Welcome to the *Waterworld* of computer games. Sierra's **Phantasmagoria**, the long-delayed "adult" horror multimedia interactive movie/adventure game from **King's Quest** designer Roberta Williams. It's *Waterworld* all over again – overblown, unintentionally hilarious and incredibly dull. Sierra has long promised that this would be the adventure, the culmination of all of their years of quality productions, and a window to the future of the adventure game. Take me back to 1989, please...

Phantasmagoria is a haunted house story, which is perhaps the worst horror cliché one could imagine (the second being demonic possession, and it's here, too). If done right, it could have been derivative but at least entertaining. The story goes something like this. A couple buy a house just outside of a mysterious town where no one wants to talk about said house (can you say *Amityville?*). They find out it was owned by a magician who went nuts and killed a bunch of people. Someone gets possessed by a demon and all hell ensues.

The story is undermined by a large number of plot holes. The first can be found in the house itself. Our couple have just purchased an enormous piece of real estate but apparently didn't feel like looking at all of the rooms. They somehow missed the giant theater that's part of the house (the door was locked?). Oh, and this theater just happens to include a nice torture device, something that might have given them a minor clue about the previous owner's sanity.

Horror must be a tough thing to pull off on the computer, but one way you *wouldn't* want to do it is the way it's been done here. First off, any horror fan will tell you music is extremely important to setting tone and establishing tension, but here Sierra have chosen to use that "tension" music *throughout* the game. Walk across the room, tension music. Pick up a rock, tension music. When the heroine of the game Adrienne checks her makeup for the 100th time, tension music. Adrienne brushes back her hair, well, you get the idea. The unfortunate thing is that the music is quite good, just inappropriate.

Most of what little tension that exists in the game is a result of the old "someone jumps from



Ooh, scary...and oh so controversially "graphic." The old "stake through the chest" trick

off camera to scare the protagonist" variety. The endgame does feature some tension, because the game abruptly switches from a traditional point-and-click adventure to a **Dragon's Lair**-style "click before you die" game.

Another offender in the game is the gratuitous use of useless camera angles. In film at least, the use of the camera is usually driven by the narrative (i.e. shooting a villain from slightly below looking up to make them look larger and more menacing). **Phantasmagoria** shares a flaw with most interactive movies, though, because it uses the most unnecessary angles imaginable to reveal the action (probably just because the designers *can* do it technologically, not because it makes any sense narratively). It goes something like this: "We make a 3D model so we can place a camera anywhere in a room. Let's have a shot through the fireplace, behind a shelf full of cans or, best of all, from the *perspective of a book*." Sometimes a simple establishing shot is all that's needed; just because you *can* do something doesn't mean you *should* do it, eh?

The acting is terrible, but the actors aren't helped by a script which has them saying things like "Do you have something that would clear a clogged drain... you know, drain cleaner?" The worst performance is given by David Homb, as the possessed boyfriend. When he goes into full possession mode, the game turns into a laugh riot (unfortunately it's supposed to be scary, remember?). The recording of the voices is even weird. Everyone sounds like they're talking in a tomb (must be that spooky "haunted" effect).

As an adventure game, **Phantasmagoria** fea-



Victoria Morsell as Adrienne consoles David Homb after the latest round of critical drubbings

tures a ridiculously small number of things to do, each of which takes way too long. The game is broken down into seven chapters, one on each of the seven CDs (I'd argue seven CDs is a marketing decision rather than a necessity, but it does reduce disk shuffling), and each may take up to two hours for an average player to complete. With little direction – and the fact that each CD allows you to travel to almost every location – the end result is a game which appears much longer than it really is. For example, in chapter two you have to drive to town and buy some drain cleaner and hand it over to your boyfriend. That's a whole CD? Yow, is this fun or what?

Overall, had **Phantasmagoria** been released last Christmas it would have been a mediocre game people might have praised for its technology (much like the vastly overrated **Under a Killing Moon**), but today it's simply a disaster. As an adventure game it's well below average, but it's not being sold as an adventure game – it's a full-blown interactive movie/multimedia experience marketed as the best money can buy. **Johnny Mnemonic** is a better interactive movie and **Buried in Time** is a far superior multimedia experience (and was done for less than 1/10th of the cost). Sometimes you just don't get what you pay for.



Steve Bauman

Designed by: **Roberta Williams**
Published by: **Sierra**
Platforms: **Windows, DOS**



Letterman did things like this as a joke – this is the legendary "book" cam



And here's the always popular "behind the shelves" cam



The land of no shadows... very spooky indeed



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The Last Dynasty



A space launch... countdown... 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Liftoff. Something goes wrong. It turns out it wasn't a real launch but a couple of guys launching a backyard rocket who speak French but are poorly dubbed in English. They decide to go to Mount Baldy. A couple of space ships appear out of nowhere and get into battle. The two guys hide. One ship lands. They enter the ship. They somehow are able to fly the ship. They defeat the bad guy. They fly around space. They kill some more bad guys. They land on a planet. They meet a guy. He claims to be one of the guys father. The father says that the son carries the Universal Knowledge. The guy rebels and takes off to join the freedom fighters.

The guys fights a bunch of battles. He meets the rebels. He fights more battles. He lands on a planet. He solves a bunch of obscure object puzzles and destroys the clone of the Universal Knowledge. He fights some more battles. He saves his dad and the world. He goes home to Earth. Evil is defeated once again by the forces of good.

Got that? Welcome to the wonderfully warped and bizarre world of France's *Coktel Vision*, the masterminds behind the legendary *Inca* games. *Sierra's The Last Dynasty*, which is what they're calling their latest space combat/adventure game/interactive movie, is what I've just described for you and yes, it is as confusing as it sounds. I mean, this game enters whole new realms of stupid – but I mean that as a compliment.

The *Inca* games, for those of you unfortunate enough to have missed them, were two of the dumbest games ever released, mixing the ancient Incas with World War I fighter pilots and outer space combat. Did they make any sense? None whatsoever, but the combat was pretty entertaining and the random adventuring was thoroughly frustrating. But one kept playing just to see how much worse the game could get, and it usually did. I loved 'em.

The Last Dynasty seems to take itself so seriously that it can't help but be an absolute laugh riot. You have to hear the lame dialogue to believe it. The acting might be brilliant in French, but dubbed into English it loses whatever dramatic effect it may have had (and I somehow doubt it had any to begin with). Adding to the surreal *Kung Fu Theater*-style dubbing effect is the rather obvious Americanized look of the leads, down to their baseball caps and grunge attire.

All of the cut scenes featuring our heroes are outrageously bad so you stay riveted to them just to see if they can get any worse. However, all of the cut scenes featuring just the space ships and such are absolutely gorgeous. In fact, this is actually one of the most beautiful games I've seen this year. The sound is fantastic too, with an incredibly over the top bombastic orchestral score that somehow makes perfect sense.

The gameplay starts off as *Wing Commander*, moves on to *Myst* and then returns back to *Wing Commander*. The combat scenes start out easy and move on to rather difficult, with the mouse control being one of the bigger problems. This being a Windows game, slow computers will feature some slowdowns when a large number of ships appear on screen at one time.

The *Myst* style adventure segments take place at the enemy base and feature some spectacular rendered graphics. The movement is like *7th Guest*, but most of the locations are complete 3D models so you can get a 360 degree view of them. You have to complete a number of tasks on the base but you are given very few clues. A lot of trial and error (mostly the latter) will be required to actually finish this part of the game.

So what do you get when you combine a mediocre *Wing Commander* with an illogical but attractive *Myst*? You get *The Last Dynasty*, a game so bad it's brilliant. The game is entertaining because it makes so little sense that you can't help but force yourself along just



Yow, these are some seriously good graphics



Your craft landing in some desert place, or something like that...

to see what happens. The best games do that. So I guess this is one of those types of games. Or maybe not. If you don't have a sense of humor or hate b-movies, avoid *The Last Dynasty*. Me, I can't wait for the sequel. Then again, I'm still waiting for *Ishtar 2*.



Steve Bauman

Designed by: **Coktel Vision**

Published by: **Sierra**

Platform: **Windows**



Hey, let's pound some brewskis and watch MTV



Wing Commander for Windows? Surely you jest?



Dude, let's go down to Starbucks, man...

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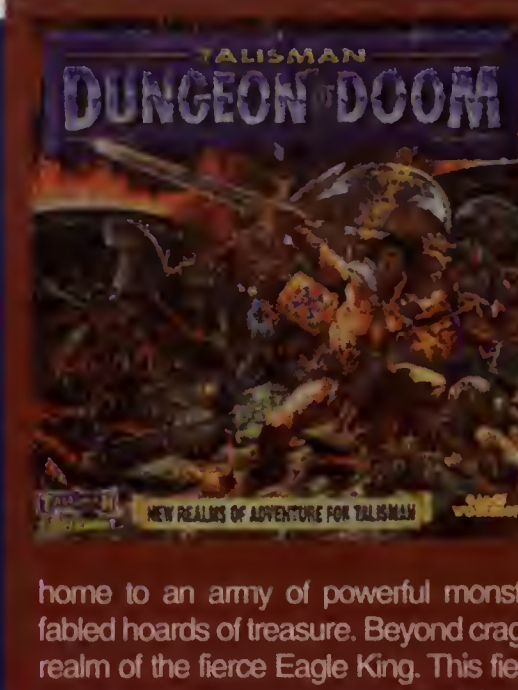
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THE MEER SHALL

INHERIT

HELL.

Robot City

The Three Laws of Robotics:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given by human beings except when such orders conflict with the first law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not cause a conflict with the first or second law. — Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot*

So what's going on in **Robot City**? Published by Byron Preiss Multimedia and distributed by WEA Visual Entertainment, **Robot City** drags the player slowly up the highest slope of a multimedia cyber-coaster, then cuts the cable — and it's quite a ride. Don't look down. Arcade-action fans, wait! Heel! Sit! That is only a figurative assessment. That slope pertains to edge-of-the-seat plot tension, not rip-roaring space piloting stuff.

Classic Sci-Fi fans will be thrilled to see that the world of **RC** is loosely based on the work *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov, probably the most beloved master of the genre. In fact, a data recorder named ISAAC is fondly included as one of the game props. Descriptions of phenomena such as Spacer worlds and the ever popular positronic brain abound. Although the initiated will wax nostalgic, those unfamiliar with any of these concepts will not be left in the dark. Everything is quite well explained at the outset.

You are Derec. Well, actually you are *not* Derec, although that's what they call you. "Derec" is on the logo of your coveralls...which reminds me of that "Back to the Future" gag when folks were calling Marty McFly "Calvin Klein" — after all, a name on one's underwear is pretty definitive identification — (or used to be) — and few folks swap underwear (or get caught at it, anyway), — but I digress...

You awaken in a strange room and you are



Your personal assistant - where did he leave his tux?

unaware of your identity. Very early on, you find that there are only two humans besides yourself in **Robot City**, one murdered doctor and one assistant at large. Since it appears that all other inhabitants are robots, and by virtue of the Laws of Robotics, the only ones who could have committed the murder are the assistant — or you. I will not proceed with plot development, since the plot is the essence of the game, except to say that you must investigate the murder and vindicate yourself, while steering clear of enemy robots. Even those who call you "friend Derec" leave you a bit uneasy.

The city is growing and changing as you proceed. It seems almost to be a living entity — a kind of neural net. Forget your mapping skills. The streets change before your eyes. You approach an intersection, and poof! it's gone. It is very easy to get lost this way, and may be frustrating at times, but just when you think that suicide may be the answer and you start to dial Jack Kevorkian, another clue appears. Either that, or you've walked in a huge circle and are

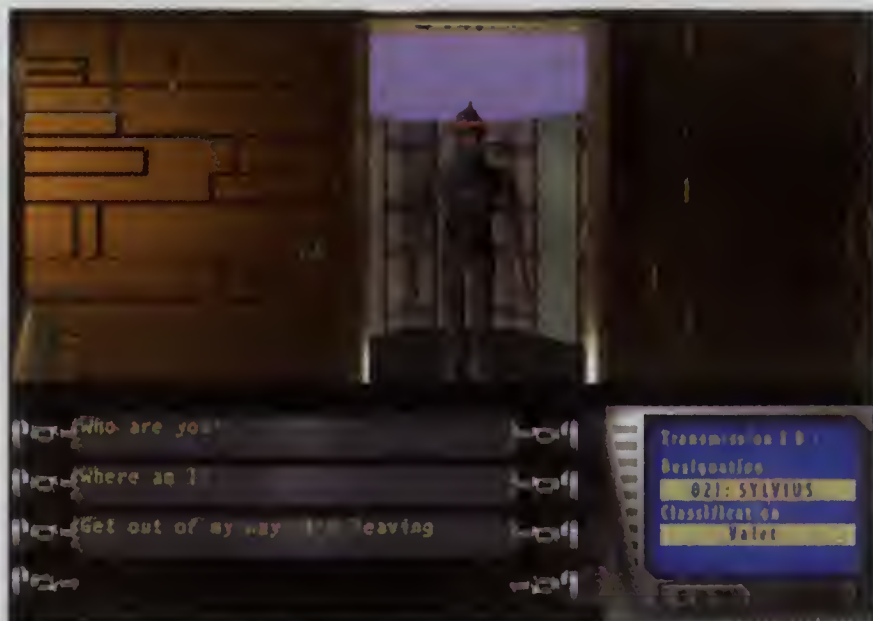
back where you started. This may be **RC**'s weakest point, this aimless wandering; however I found myself not minding much, always engrossed in the plot, always hoping that around the corner would be something new.

The interface is first-person, and every now and then it may be difficult to align yourself directly with an item with which you need to interact. Turn, step, turn back — turn, step, turn back. You often find yourself doing *that* little dance. Any small annoyance, though was worth the effort since, overall, I like this game a lot.

Art Director Dale Fowler's team (yeah, the art-guys) is to be commended on a beautifully represented, very eerie and unearthly world. The most unusual success here is that they have created an environment which is quite homogeneous in color and texture, yet which also holds visual interest. We believe that robots "breed" here. It is a mechanical, techno-place, yet strangely alive. Part of the life-giving force lies in a very strong score, created under the musical direction of Richard Sales. It haunts me even when I am doing unrelated tasks. In fact, the whole game haunts me when I am doing unrelated tasks. It can haunt me in my house, it can haunt me with a mouse, it can haunt me here or there, it can haunt me anywhere. I do believe this Robot scam, so cyber-punk me, Sam I Am. (If anyone can tell me where I've totally lost it, or if perchance you find it, please e-mail it back to me quickly...)



Cindy Yans



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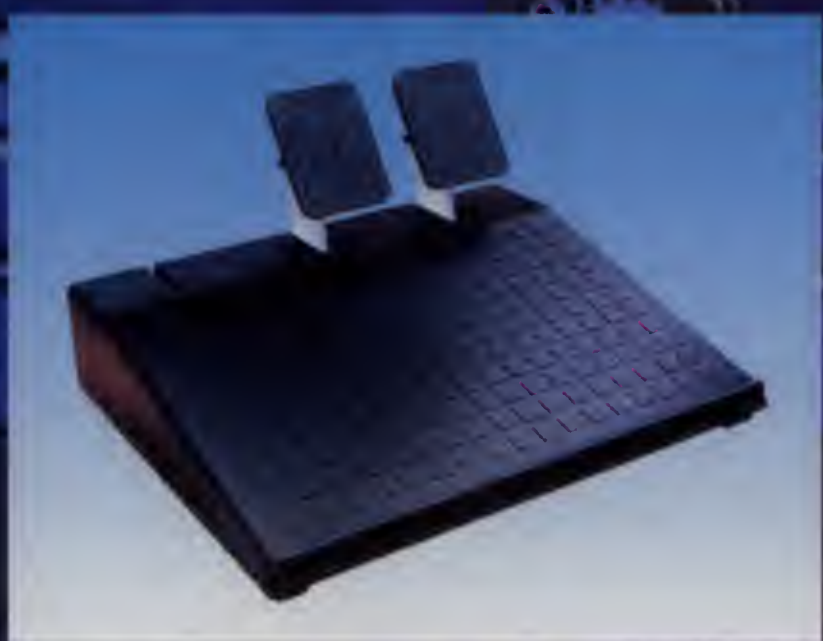


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Space Quest 6: The Spinal Frontier

It's amazing what a little pixel character can do for a company. With his stodgy stone-gray track-suit and blonde locks, Roger Wilco has built himself into an adventure game icon. If Yogi was "smarter than your average bear," this space cadet is "dumber than your average rock." With only humor at his side, Sierra's spaced-out hero embarks on his latest intergalactic laugh-fest in **Space Quest 6: The Spinal Frontier**. With the sinister arch-enemy Sharpei tailgating his ship, there's only one way to get out of this mess: use your brain, or "do the Wilco" by browsing through this walk-through. It details every mouse-click you'll need to conquer the forces of evil, not to mention Roger's ineptness.

Right from the start, Roger is caught in a jam, buried up to his waist in the pavement due to a transmission error. Use the hand icon to grab onto a passing robot to solve this predicament. Next up Roger needs some form of identification. For a quick fix, click the hand on the Security ID card on the bicycle to the right. Sadly, the picture on the card looks nothing like Wilco, so you'll need to somehow alter the photo. Somewhere on Polysorbate LX there will be a Photo Booth in beta-testing. Click your buckazoid on the booth, and marvel at those mug shots. Click the photos on the ID card, and Roger is now an official Polysorbate security guard.

Endodroid runner

Also roaming around town is Blaine Rohmer, a shady bounty-hunter who needs to meet ends with an Endodroid who "made some people mad." Talk to him

twice, and he will offer you fifty buckazoids as a reward for capturing the alien. Enter the Orion Nightclub and take the elevator up to the top level. Take a bite out of space-crime by clicking your ID on the spaced-out aliens in the back. They will quickly exit stage right, and now you can grab their supplies. Click the hand icon on the hoses in inventory to assemble them into one strand. Furthermore, click on the nitrogen below the desk, and then click it on the open conduit to the right.

Head downstairs to where the party is hopping, and show your ID card to the Bartender. He will offer you a special drink, the Uvula Spritzer, which buys you three minutes of time. Quickly open the freezer and grab the ice tray. Then, yank twice on the conduit that is third from the left. Finally, use one end of the assembled hoses on the broken conduit, and the other on the far west wall conduit. Rush upstairs and click on the nitrogen canister. Head downstairs to see the results.

Beside the elevator, click the walk icon on the metal door three times to kick it open. Sit back and enjoy the sight of one frozen Endodroid.

If Yogi was 'smarter than your average bear,' this space cadet is 'dumber than your average rock.'



Our two lovebirds: Roger and Stellar

Pick up the metal pipe and take your best batter's stance: break the droid like a plate of glass. In inventory, use the broom and dustpan to clean up your mess, and then transfer the droid nuggets into the ice-cube tray. Now he's ready for delivery to Harrison (aka Blaine). Go

outside and exchange the ice-cubes for your stash of cash.

Head on into the arcade and speak to Djurkwhad, who is the champion at **Stooge Fighter III**. Rumble with him, but don't worry: you'll automatically lose.

Head on outside after defeat, and look who's rummaging around the streets: Elmo Pug, from **Space Quest III**. He will offer an exchange: the cheat sheet to **Stooge Fighter III** for a

bottle of Coldsordian Brandy. Enter Boot Liquors and pay Pa for a bottle. Exchange the bottle for the cheat sheet, and head back to the arcade to challenge the alien. When selecting a character, enter the secret code: A-B-B-A-C-A-C-A, and use it during the game – blow Sigourney's better-half out of the water.

Walk to the far west-end of town and speak with the Manager of the Dew Beam Inn twice to reserve a room. Give him 300 buckazoids, and sign your Bill Shatner; he will give you a room key. Use the elevator to go upstairs and enter your room, 1220J. Just as you are about to enter, two space-scum, Nigel and Singent, manage to capture our irresistible space-hero!

I'm all shocked up

Let's get Roger out of this mess. Click on the key ring, and then the nail. Use the nail on Roger to pick the hand-cuffs. Even in the cyber-future, they're still using those crazy old hand-



Isn't that the bridge from True Lies?



It's two guards against one space-cadet



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Roger makes a few dollars on the side

cuffs. Can't someone spring for cyber-cuffs? Nonetheless, click on each end of the Pelvis rug, then lay it on the ground and use it. Immediately click the hand on Singent's neck, and he will be electrocuted. Take his key ring, and then grab the Burlesque Moddie from the top of the dehumidifier.

Repeatedly click the hand icon on the stack of CDs until you find Popular Techtronics. Use this CD on the 3DOA player, and read the article on converting DataCorders into Homing Beacons. This is the copy-protection; the solution is explained on pages 7 and 12 of **Popular Janitronics**, included in the game package. After setting up the homing beacon, use the key ring on the door to exit.

To rid the world of Nigel, pick up the Churlish moddie off the floor. Click your hand on the Churlish moddie to remove the label, and paste it on the Burlesque moddie. Now, give Nigel the modified moddie and he is space-dust. Pick up his belt and remove the two items. In inventory, click the hand on the Damping Field Modulator

and exit the room. Now activate the homing beacon; Stellar will save your sorry space-behind.

Polysorbate's most wanted

Aboard the deepship, in inventory, click on the grooming assistant and then use the wad of hair on the DNA Pattern Analyzer after obtaining permission from Jebba the Hop. Now click the hand on the analyzer, place the hair, and click on scan and then imprint to card. Use the DataCart on the ComPost, located on the far left wall, to discover the identity of Nigel. Use ComPost to transfer to Roger's Quarters, and upon hearing the message, beam over to the teleport room.

On Delta V, take the elevator to the quarters.

You will perform the vulgar nerve pinch on one guard, but the other one quickly carts Roger off to jail.

Obey Sharpei's orders, and clean the bathroom floor, rattle the toilet handle, and then try to find her medicine in the cabinet. While you were pre-occupied, Sharpei optioned to flick a button; a deadly button. Quickly rip off the hydraulic pump below Sharpei's bed, and use it on the door. Watch the cinematic feast unfold.

On the Deepship at Santiago's funeral, read the Eulogy in inventory. Now the holodeck will disappear; enter program code 555-1212 to activate the Vulgar Nerve Pinch routine with Ptooie. Head over to Roger's quarters and read the shocking message from Stellar; she's still alive! Rush to the bridge and try to convince the captain that he must go after her. Sadly, your plea falls upon deaf ears, so transport to the Shuttle Bay and click the hand on the smallest of the two guards. You will perform the vulgar nerve pinch on one guard, but the other one quickly carts Roger off to jail.

The hunt begins

In the concrete cell, wait for Dorff to deliver the food. Put the food in inventory, and combine it in this order to create a Roger dummy: Yoda Ears; Bobbit Kabobs; Rack of Orat; Baguettes; Tubers; Melon; and Gragh. Use the dummy on the cot, then click the hand on the cart; Roger will be able to escape under the tablecloth. Since you are now an escaped convict, watch your every step. Transport to sickbay, and steal some Morphine from inside the cabinet on the right side of the center console. Port over to 8-Rear

and talk to Circuit Sidney three times. You will receive his right arm and eyeball; what a pal!

Beam over to the Shuttle Bay and inject the Morphine into the doughnut. Now, place the doughnut on Magnum Opus' tray of food. Use the Nerve Pinch again on

the smaller guard, and both will be eliminated. Remove the alarm key off the larger guard's belt, then use your hand on the door. In the inventory use Sidney's arm on the other door button, and you are now in the true Shuttle Bay. Use the alarm in inventory to locate the vehicle and unlock it. Enter the vehicle and turn on the power.

Press the ICD button and set up the fuel tanks as such: 1: Lanthanum; 2: Sulfur; 3: Silver; Catalyst: Neon; Confirmation Code: Lasagne. Press initiation, and use Sydney's eyeball on the retinal scan. You are ready to rock and roll in space! After running into problems during the Anti-Anomaly, open the glove compartment and remove all the materials. Open the homing beacon and remove the little green modulating crystal. Use the Glue on the crystal, and open the crystal panel in the back of the ship on the right hand side. Use the glue on the large crystal, and then paste the small crystal onto the larger one. Now grab the recall notice behind the pilot's seat and read it. Open the hood and trunk from the cockpit, put on the EVA suit located in the back closet, then exit the shuttle. More in a future issue of *Strategy Plus*!



Geoff Keighley



The Polysorbate peddler: Fester

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Buried in Time: The Journeyman Project 2

Unca straddles space stupifactions

This is part one of a bare-bones walk-through of the puzzle solutions in Adventure mode. There's much more game to explore than indicated here.

Opening remarks

This game is all about discovery. You first must discover the puzzles and then the solutions. It's easy to miss clues to both in the mazes you must traverse. Not only do you have to look right, left and straight ahead in this game, but up and down as well!

Directions used in this walkthrough are F for forward, L for Left, R for Right, U for Up and D for down. Z is used for both zooming in and out. Clicking on objects when the cursor is a magnifying glass zooms in. Clicking on objects zooms out when the cursor is a double arrow.

Home, sweet home

Go F, L and Z the figurines on the cabinet, you have left a message for yourself. Next go R, F, F, F, R, D and Z the articles on Gage's desk (papers and an answering machine). Click on the buttons on the left of the answering machine to playback video messages. Go U, R, F, L, F, F, L, D to dissolve the door of the enviro-projector room. Go F, R, F, R, D and pick up the round object (the cursor changes to a hand indicating it can pick up the object). Drag the object to your inventory window. Click on the magnifying glass in the inventory window to get a description of the object. While you're at it, you might as well examine all the objects in your inventory list. You should also activate (clicking on their letter icons in the inventory window) the chips and check out their menus. You'll need to activate the Interface chip (the letter I) if you want to save or quit the game anyway. Go ahead and save now, then activate the File chip (F) and read all its files.

Where's James Earl Jones?

Next, turn on the news channel of the future: INN, a parody of CNN, but without Jones' trademark vocal introduction. Go U, L, F, L, D to stand in front of the enviro-projector. Click on it, then Z. Click on the INN button to



Click on this figurine for a nice surprise

the right. Watch all four news stories, even the commercials. Click on the highlighted hyper-text in the text sections of the story for more information. When you're finished, exit and Z. Go F, R, F, F, R and wait for the door to dissolve. Go F, R, F, R, F, L, F. You can now order and receive the ShopNet items. Click the Power and Menu buttons. Click ShopNet. Enter the Cheese Girl code (625-94-978) and then click Transmit. Click Accept Purchase then click Menu to get back to ShopNet again and order the Translator chip (689-22-378). The music video (538-48-257) is not necessary, but you can order it and insert it in the enviro-projector, if you wish.

Back at the Menu click on Post Box, now. Click on the items you've ordered one at a time and click on Replicate. Drag the items to your inventory and examine them.

Let's jump! Arthur is at Farnstein's Lab. Activate the Jump chip (J), select the Jump Menu and then select Farnstein's Lab. Click

on the Mission Briefing and click Return. Click on the Jump Menu again and then on Jump.

Lost in space

Fun trip, eh? But, how does it feel to be lost in space and running out of air? Heh-heh. Just drag the Cheese Girl to the left side of the view window and let go. Awaaaaay we go! Oops, this hatch is sealed. Go D, L, F, F, F, F and click on this hatch. Now, go F, F, L, U, F and Z the dark screen to bring up a schematic. Click till you find the Capacitance Array portion and click again. Ooops! That alarm tells us that something is blocking a hatch. Z out and then Go U, R, F, R, R, F. Pick up the metal bar. Go R, R, F, L, U, F and Z the screen. Find and click on Capacitance, again. Now we've got pressure! Z out and go U, R, F. Save the game (saving often is a good habit) and click on the hatch. Now, go F, R, F, R, F, L, F, L, L, L, F, R, R, F, L, F, R, F. What a maze, eh? Aren't you glad you saved first? Click on the hatch and go F.



It's a chicken or Chichen Itza?



Next month, Chateau Gaillard!



The green dots and red dots must trade places



The pressurization schematic

Meeting Arthur

Arthur (the ship's AI) says hello. Go F when he asks. Click Yes to his scanning question and Yes again when he suggests you copy him. Go R, R, U and Z the override panel. Enter Arthur's code (32770). Click the handle when the hatch opens. Whoops! Some ride, eh? Click on the hatch again to open things up. Look what we have here! A puzzle! The solution is to (labeling the dots 1 through 6, from top to bottom) click on #'s 4, 3, 2, 4, 5, 6, 3, 2, 1, 4, 5, 6, 2, 1 and 6 in that order.

Arthur is now on your blank chip! Whenever you want to know more about an area, pull up his chip and click on the Comment button when it's lit. Now, let's blow this dump. Pull up the Jump chip and activate it. Select Recall and it's home again, home again, jiggy jig! Now go F, F, F, F, L, F, L, F. Buy another Cheese Girl and jump back to Farnstein's lab. Time's a wasting!

Same time, same place

Here we go again. Use the Cheese Girl. Go D, L, F, F, F, F, F. Click the hatch, go F, F, L, U, F and Z the control panel, but this time pressurize Biomass. Zoom out and go R, U, F, R, R, F. Click the hatch



It doesn't look like Art to me

and go F seven times to get to the next hatch. Click on it. It will open after Arthur helps out. Go F into the elevator and click the green text button. Go R, R, D and click on the hatch. Go F and click the up arrow. Go R and Z the control panel on the left side of the screen. Click on Run Mining Cycle. Go L, D and Z the control panel again. Click on Run O2 Extraction. Z out and go R, R and Z the recharge station. Click on the black nozzle on the right. Phew! An Oxygen refill! About time, eh? Z out and go R, R, R and click on the up arrow. Go R, R, F and click the green button. Go D, R and drag the empty water container into your inventory. Go R and click on the hatch. Go F, F, R, D and click on the Biomass hatch.

It doesn't look like Art to me

Go F, F, F, L. Pull up the evidence chip and activate it (E). Click on Locate. Move the box cursor around the sculpture until it adds a center-dot. Click. The evidence won't record. Go D and Z the left side of the rack. Click the green button to test the frequency. Hmm. Negative response. Move the cursor to the dial and click when it changes to a right arrow. Keep testing until you get a positive response. Then Z out and go U. Evidence chip still



The dials properly lined up to Tree 3



Arthur asking for your permission. He obviously wants you to say yes



What an answering machine of the future might look like! Yech!



Examining a skull

activated? Click the sculpture again. Now, the chip automatically records the anomaly evidence.

Go L, F, D, F, click the hatch, go F, L, F, click the hatch, go F, click the green button, go R, R, D and click the hatch. Go F, click the down button and go L, L, L and Z the recharge station. Drag the water container to the blue valve. Click the yellow valve to fill the container with water. Drag it back to your inventory.

Jump time! Pull up the Jump chip and select Chichen Itza. Click Mission Briefing, Return and Jump.

It's a chicken or Chichen Itza?

Go R, F, L, F. Pull up the Translator chip and Z the dials on the back wall. Click on them till you get one of the dates listed on the above right wall (Tree 3 works). Z out and go L and D. Get the bowl. Go U, L, F and D. Drag the bowl onto the statue to drop down into the Mayan Underworld. Go D and get the skull. Go U, F, D and get the copper medallion. That's all for now. See you in part two.



Andy Backer

Dungeon Master 2: The Legend of Skullkeep

Unca bares bones and cracks conundrums

There is a brief walkthrough included in the game's documentation. This article begins at the point you are ready to find the four clan keys that open Skullkeep.

Practice, practice, practice

Most of the monsters can be killed with 6th level fireballs. Develop that skill by first practicing FUL (Firelight or Torch spell) at every strength level and then FUL IR (Fireball). Continue practicing each character's wizard skills, but don't neglect their ninja, weapon and priest skills.

Smart monsters, stupid companions

The monsters you face in your search for the keys are (in order of appearance) intelligent Globbs, Worms, Bats, Stegosaurus, Whirlwinds, Wolves, Dwarves, Giants, Specters, Trees, Skeletal Specters, Mummies, Skeletons, and attack Minions.

A monster that is in the same square you are cannot be hurt. Cast the spell, or swing a sword when they are one square away.

The Specters, Tornadoes and Skeletal Specters can only be killed with DES EW (Harm Non-Material Being). Your party is faster than the Stegosaurus and Whirlwinds and can run by them. However, Stegosaurus steaks are most filling. Yum!

Do not carry weapons when facing the greedy Dwarves and Giants. They'll just steal them. Instead, use a combination of fireballs and bare-handed punches or kicks against them. Offer the wolves a bone.

Geography 101

Besides the barracks, the home area contains four shops, an outdoor fountain and a teleport (unusable without a Techshield). There is a pylon and a gate to the other areas. The Sun (RA) Key from the food shop has to be inserted in the pylon to unlock the gate.



Oops! The bat got in before we could slam the gate on him (or her)!

Is that Skullkeep (shiver) ?

Once the gate is opened turn left past the gate and go straight ahead through a tree arbor. Continue straight ahead and then turn right at the stone pylon and go straight ahead to enter Skullkeep's foyer. The inner door is opened by inserting four blue clan keys in the round key recess. The clan keys are found in various sectors near Skullkeep.

Stegosaurus (yum)!

The first clan key lays on a round stone table in the land of Whirlwinds along with a Magic Map and the Lightning Key. Instead of going straight ahead to Skullkeep, turn left and go through an arbor to enter the land of Stegosaurus. The land of Whirlwinds has an arbor entrance there.

Howling at the moon

The Lightning Key opens the gate opposite the Bat Cave, just outside of the arbor leading to the Stegosaurus. This is the land of Dwarves where you will find an arbor entrance to the land of Wolves (east and then north of the tele-

port) where the second clan key, a scout map, and the Moon Key lay on a stone table.

Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum

The moon key opens a gate in the land of Dwarves leading to a transport, a gate requiring the IR key and the arbor entrance to the land of Giants. There you'll find the third clan key and the IR key on a stone table.

How much is that key on the table?

The IR key opens the gate to an area with an armor entrance to a Cemetery gate. The Cemetery is guarded by Specters. There is an opening in the fence that leads through some vicious trees to a castle back entrance.

After entering the building hug the right wall and look for a button. It opens a recess hiding the FUL key. Take it and turn around. You'll see the stairs to the basement. Sidestep one square right and go straight down the stairs. Destroy the two skeletal specters.



Oh, is Mummy dead?



A mine in the sky!



All clan keys in place

What you didn't know about Scouting

Go back upstairs and save just before entering the moving trap room. Use the Scout Map to safely move around. Click on the map's Scout Minion icon (upper right hand corner), then click on the square in front of your party on the map. Quickly move your party into that square. The moving traps can not enter the same square as the huge eyeball.

The FUL key opens a door in the right wall. There you'll find a key that will open the center door. The hallway of the right wall room has several floor triggers. Each one releases a mummy. You can either kill them individually, or run all the way to the end of the hall, enter the room, turn around and kill the mummies by closing the door on them a few times. Heh-heh.

The center room contains a round wooden table with the clan piece on it. Think of it as a trading table in one of the stores. Place a copper coin on it and a ghost will materialize and turn the table to take the coin. The left wall contains a hallway leading outside and back to Skullkeep.

Finding your way around Rodeo Drive

A trick for selling more than one item to a shop keeper is to place the trunk on the table, and then add as many items as you want to sell. Remove the trunk to allow the table to revolve.

The sword Excsymer is the best weapon you can buy at home base. It increases Mana as well. Buy the two sets of Fire Poleyn armor when you have the money. They raise a character's strength stat, allowing them to carry more weight. The Techelm raises wisdom, making your spell casters more effective.

You need a Techshield to use the transport squares (stand on a square, click the shield icon and you will be transported back to home base). There is one for free beside the transport square in the Land of the Dwarves.

Buy a Vorax or two near the land of Giants through an arbor exit near the stone table. Search the area for the entrance to the shop.

There is a magic store through an exit near the red fountains outside of the moving pit area. Here you'll find items such as an Emerald Staff (raises Mana and has a heal spell).



A bloody fountain (yuk and echhh!)



Welcome to Skullkeep (heh-heh)



Click on the purple doughnut in the upper right hand corner of the scout map for help with the moving traps.

The Giant's throwing axes are a good source of income. Take them to home base via the teleport near the land of the Giants entrance and return for more.

Next month Unca, Bat, Bash, Wild and Abma enter Skullkeep! Be there or be square.



Andy Backer

Spells R Us



Casting spells involves selecting magic syllables. There are four groupings. The first grouping is for the six different degrees of power. In the beginning of the game you will only be able to effectively cast power level one spells (LO). The spells listed below do not include the power level syllable, since it is arbitrary. Select a power syllable first before selecting any of the others. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the position (from left the right) of the syllable in the six-syllable charts.

The Party Shield spell is YA IR (1, 4)

The Spell shield spell is YA IR DAIN (1, 4, 3)

The Aura of Strength spell is OH EW KU (3, 2, 1)

The Aura of Dexterity spell is OH EW ROS (3, 2, 2)

The Aura of Vitality spell is OH EW NETA (3, 2, 3)

The Fire Shield spell is FUL BRO NETA (4, 5, 3)

The Darkness spell is DES IR SAR (5, 4, 6)

The Porter Minion spell is ZO EW ROS (6, 2, 2)

The Reflector spell is ZO BRO ROS (6, 5, 2)

The Guard Minion spell is ZO EW NETA (6, 2, 4)

The Magic Marker spell is YA EW (1, 2)

The Poison Cloud spell is OH VEN (3, 1)

The Invisibility spell is OH EW SAR (3, 2, 6)

The Push spell is OH KATH KU (3, 3, 1)

The Pull spell is OH KATH ROS (3, 3, 2)

The Lightning Bolt spell is OH KATH RA (3, 3, 5)

The Accelerate Party spell is OH IR ROS (3, 4, 2)

The Daylight spell is OH IR RA (3, 4, 5)

The Firelight spell is FUL (4)

The Fireball spell is FUL IR (4, 4)

The Poison Foe spell is DES VEN (5, 1)

The Harm Non Material spell is DES EW (5, 2)

The Open Door spell is ZO (6)

The Attack Minion spell is ZO EW KU (6, 2, 1)

The following potions must be created by priests with an empty flask in hand. These potions must then be ingested.

The Stamina Potion is YA (1)

The Health Potion is VI (2)

The Cure Poison potion is VI BRO (2, 5)

The Mana Potion is ZO BRO RA (6, 5, 5)

The Strength potion is FUL BRO KU (4, 5, 1)

The Dexterity potion is OH BRO ROS (3, 5, 2)

The Vitality potion is YA BRO NETA (1, 5, 4)

The Wisdom potion is YA BRO DAIN (1, 5, 3)

The Shield potion is YA BRO (1, 5)

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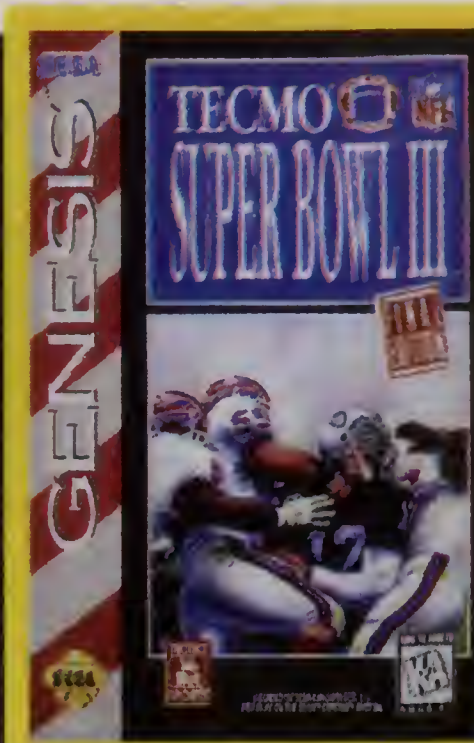
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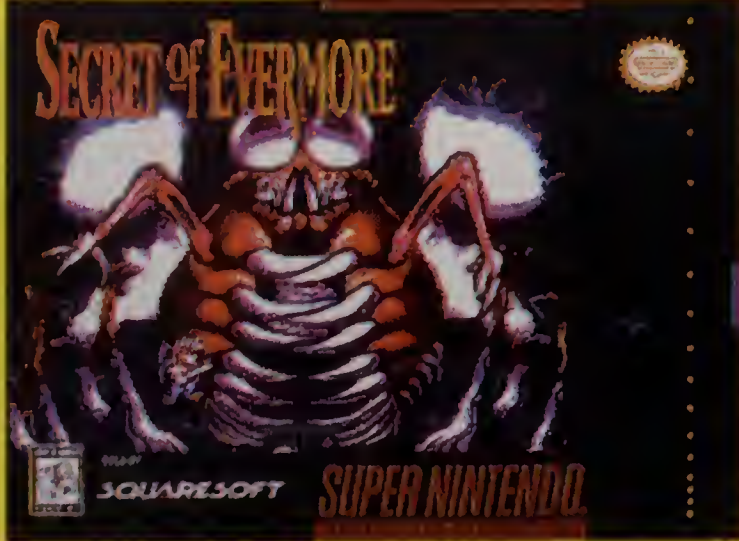
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Jewels of the Oracle

Cindy Yans consults Shakespeare — Bard of the Oracle

A Hints and Tips article about **Jewels of the Oracle** — the notion seems almost sacrilegious. If the ancients had wanted modern day mortals dissecting their folklore and nifty devices, they would certainly have posted detailed instructions on every package of Double Stuff Oracleos and on every bag of Oracle Chow. But did this happen? Of course not. Hence, it seems we were meant to reflect, to bend our minds in order to discover the secrets of the conundrums so beautifully crafted for us by the designer.

That said, I will discuss several of **JotO**'s puzzles, but will provide no "real solutions" such as "turn left, pull lever, swing your partner 'round 'n'round..." I will deal mostly with the premise of each puzzle, since even the strategies are not tangible in many cases. I have been fortunate enough to be in touch with Courtland Shakespeare, the designer/father figure of **JotO**, who kindly provided some of his insights into the worlds of each room. I had initially suspected (from past socio-anthropological fascination) that the game's roots were deeply steeped in historical research, but not until input from Mr. Shakespeare (Courtland, is that your true name?) did I realize that each room's design and concept was so well conceived. My respect for the game and for Mr. Shakespeare himself continue to deepen, and I will include some of the more colorful historical notes he has provided.

Let me also say at this time that the puzzles most people have deemed the most difficult to solve are (no surprise here) the most difficult to scope out in terms of helpful hints. But enough about me — starting from the first well sector in front of the altar room, and moving clockwise, let's take a look at two puzzles from each "house."

THE HOUSE OF TANTRAM

Abhoranam of Day and Night

Somewhat reminiscent of the "get the fox, hen and grain across the river algorithm," the sliding platform in the middle is used to transport the black and white disks back and forth until they are all on the right side. Click on a disk to move it to the platform, and on the platform to make it travel. You may take up to two pieces at one time, but leaving more Night than Day pieces on either side is sure failure. It is best to try getting all the black pieces across first, and the minimum number of moves to complete the task is eleven. *Historical note:* this is based on a very old conundrum first recorded by the Abbot of St. Martin of Tours, circa 799 AD in his book *Propositiones ad Acuendos Juvenes (Problems for Quickening a Young Mind)*. He is said to have created this book for Charlemagne.



Hall of Hidden Links

I have heard more animated discussion about this puzzle than any other in the game. Click on one item to select it, and click on a second object to pair it with the first, and both will disappear. You are provided with their names (beware the dreaded quern. Even after several iterations, I did not hear "Quern"...). Only after all six pairs are correct will you collect your jewel for the room. The stumbling block seems to be closed-mindedness about the relationships between items. Think beyond the normal functions of each. The pairings all make sense, but not usually in the initial intuitive way. This is an exercise in abstraction. For example, the purpose of the hammer is not just to strike, but to fit in the hand of a constructive person. On the other hand, there are items to be held by a destructive person... Be patient and open-minded. *Historical Note:* one of the most common and also oldest artifacts found anywhere across Europe is the Quern (an early version of the mortar and pestle) used for grinding. Both mortars and combs (carved bone) can be found dating well before 10,000 BC.

THE HOUSE OF KRIDA

Hall of Ascendancy

This room teaches the City's cosmogony theory (origin of the cosmos). The puzzle represents the four prime elements: Earth, Wind (sky), Sun and Moon (animals). Their emblems turn up on the game pieces and on the "animated poles" near the entrance door. The sequence show how they align and point to the life of contemplation and understanding. Each tile can be rotated and/or moved to a different location. Tiles automatically switch places. One must try to get the inner edges and central intersection points to align. Try visualizing the frame as three groups of four squares — the left four and the right four intersect with the middle four. Three different emblems must come into alignment in the center of these angle's squares. *Historical Note:* the emblems are actually adapted loosely from several divinatory systems in order to use familiar designs while establishing coherent patterns.

Leap of the Locust

We have seen many, many variations of this game throughout history, and it is one of the several "true classics" **JotO** has to offer. The pegs can be moved one at a time into either an adjacent empty space, or the adjacent space of the next peg. The yellow pegs may only move clockwise, and the green ones only counter-clockwise. Always alternate. Moving two pegs of the same color next to each other will cause nuclear detonation and the start of World War Three (WWIII the Bigger One). Well, no, but it will render the puzzle unsolvable. Don't you feel better already? *Historical note:* although the concept of this game is as ancient as they come, this particular arrangement was first published by Edouard Lucas and has been done in many variations, such as providing up to eight or twelve pegs on either side. Two pegs on each side works as well.

THE HOUSE OF PAURAH

The Path to Mahiman

What puzzle game would be complete without a maze? There are lovers of mazes, and then there are folks like me who merely accept them as ubiquitous. For this particular labyrinth, the beginning and end are on the same side of what one eventually realizes is a cube. Without losing patience, one must prove that "you can get there from here." Look ahead and try to find shapes you can remember and try never to lose sight of your orientation. Be the cube — not so easy when rotating in three-space in your mind. Or, wimp out like I did and screen print all sides to create a tangible cube. It was the *only* way I was able to solve it (she said, swallowing her pride...) *Historical Note:* Courtland was determined to keep the classic "Greek Key" design, which has traditionally been associated with mazes from Crete's Minotaur to 20th Century English gardens (not to mention that it's great for eye strain and promotes levels of high stress).

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Assembly of the Planners

Most players include this puzzle in their lists of the “Top Three Headaches” of **JotO**. I have still not solved it. Certainly we have seen this type of activity before, but reminiscence does not make it any easier – although avid **Tetris** or **Polyominoes** players may have more of a visual advantage. Drag any piece onto the gameboard. If it fits, it will remain there, or if not, will return to the storage area. The design must be completed by placing all of the pieces on the board with (gulp) no holes or empty spots except the dark surrounding squares and the one in the middle. We should be relieved that in actuality, the puzzle is only half as large as it seems. Since there are identical pieces in each color, solving one half in a monochrome fashion provides the balance of the solution by symmetry. *Historical Note:* the architecture of the room is influenced by the Puuc style of Mayan architecture (particularly Governor’s Palace at Uxmal).

Horses of Asvah

Arrange the nine panels so that horses of the same color match heads and tails. Half horses around the outside perimeter will obviously always be half-arriving or half-leaving. Tiles can be switched and rotated, although the Easy level provides no rotation capability. Start by rotating all pieces so that the heads face either up or to the right. This is a very good tip, and creates an excellent basis from which to proceed. *Historical note:* supposedly this was part of a wall in a royal castle. Over time, the wall was to be moved, but before the workmen could reassemble it, the one person who knew the solution died and the wall was reassembled in a convoluted fashion. The running horses are loosely adapted from those on the walls of Mesopotamian temples such as Nineveh and Kalhu.

THE HOUSE OF SASTRAM

The Turning of the Divasah

The emblems we see here represent the days of the week according to the City’s science and notation. There are six days to each week, and it should be noted here that much of the overall game design acknowledges the fact that counting was often done in base 6. Thus, we see the 6 well sectors and 6 Houses of the Poets. A wise mathematician once said that “base 6 is just like base 10 really... if you’re missing 4 fingers.” The six panels are to be arranged in a particular sequence. Each lever will manipulate the panels differently. Become familiar with how the order changes with each. The desired sequence is

what is difficult to determine here, but there are two not entirely obvious ways to clarify it. If your monitor is in just the right mode of contrast, you will notice that the emblems are faintly showing on the right and left walls. Also, if you continue to turn a single panel until it repeats, you will have seen the goal pattern. *Historical Note:* the emblems for the days of the week are adapted from several sources. Some are definitely “neolithic,” while others are slightly reminiscent of Egyptian glyphs. Each day is also associated with one of the Houses as well as highly socialized responsibilities. The movement is from Green Day first (new and plants) to Utsavah last (achievement and celebration).

The Memory Bhandam

We should note that when normal people think “puzzle” (and yes, that is to insinuate that most gamers are happily not normal people), they often think of the usual jigsaw or other mixed-up picture types. The designer has courteously graced us with a puzzle like this – his own creativity and whimsy coming to the forefront and leaving the strict adherence to historical reproduction behind for the moment. And a wonderful contribution it is. An unfamiliar image is divided into 28 equal pieces and scrambled upside down. This puzzle is child’s play in Easy mode (shown), but on the Hard level is no small task. Luckily, the image for the Hard level is actually found on the wall of another room, and essentially tells the story of who the player is. Set among emblems of the days and cosmic symbols, the initiates are small and approaching the larger members of the City. Between them are emblems of some of the oldest puzzle devices. At the end (on the left), one person has reached the Day of Utsavah and is receiving his shard, representing membership. I found it best to take a look at the other room’s image, fix certain dominant points in my mind’s eye, and then go back and find a key piece in the grid, building out from there. It is difficult to work strictly from left to right, but assembling larger pieces and then shifting them seems to work best.

THE HOUSE OF KAUSALAM

The Panditah of the Seventh Mountain

This puzzle is another one near the top of most folks’ difficulty lists. Arrange all of the bricks on the gameboard so that all rows and columns form numbers which are evenly divisible by seven. Each brick represents one digit. As was noted from the outset, there is no outstandingly wonderful hint available here, but there is, I am told, a program available on CompuServe’s Gamer’s Forum (GO GAMERS) which neatly solves this problem (for the truly desperate and/or pathetic). Just keeping the 7X table in mind is helpful, dealing with two digits at a time. Nines and twos can be swapped in several places, and there are at least three solutions.

Historical Note: this little pyramid of sevens is actually from a tablet found at the site of the step pyramid at Saqqara, built by Imhotep for King Zoser (3rd Dynasty) in Egypt.

Square of Ganj Dareh

The Magic Square Puzzle is one of the most traditional mathematical puzzles of all time, so of course we see one here. Click on the squares to make them turn and reveal a number from one to nine. Use each number only once. When numbers are added up, each row, column and diagonal should add up to the same number. Work on the corners first. The value will be between 10 and 24. If worst comes to worst, back away from the puzzle and look at the tally stick on the floor. Hmmm, a clue! *Historical Note:* the first magic square is supposed to have been of the order-three variety we see here, found by Emperor Yu on the shell of a turtle from the River Lo. For that reason it has also been called the Lo Shu square. It is the only magic square which cannot be done in any other possible order or solution. Since there is only one, it has enjoyed a mystical significance so powerful that at one time it was drawn or made of rope with knots and given to the sick as a cure.



THE HOUSE OF KAVI

Parity of Jalam

This is a traditional puzzle, often related to topics such as inheritance and division of estates. One often needed to come up with a technique for division, which took some imagination and more often than not resulted in argument over terms. Click on the lids or plungers of the containers to get them to exchange water. Note the scale on each container. Each wall should have an equal quantity of water. This is one of the randomized puzzles which changes each time you enter the room, so that you are able to play more than once. The best technique would be to count the total volume of the containers and count the total volume of the water and a plan should arise from there.

Hopefully you will now have gained some insight about the approaches necessary for puzzle solving in **JotO**. In any event, I believe that you now probably have a greater appreciation of the game design relative to its success in capturing much of the beauty and purity of form of the ancient world. Now where was that downloadable cheat for the 7’s puzzle?



Cindy Yans

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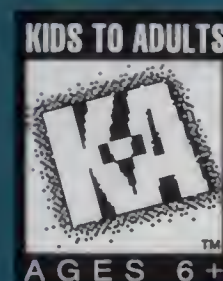
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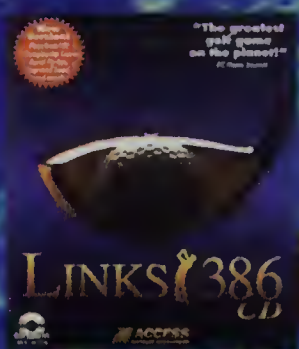
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The Hangar

Someone who really knows what he's talking about writes in – then Crunch goes slack-jawed over BAO's handy-dandy **Flight Simulator Flight Shop**

You know I am generally enthusiastic about all things flying; well, all things flying on a computer, at least. Little bro does the real thing, though, with both fixed-wing and rotary-wing (helicopter to us dunderheads) licenses and part-ownership of a small airfield in Virginia (no, not Andrews Air Force Base) to boot. To make life difficult for my blood relative, I've done my best to try to get him hooked on computer simulations of same. After his recent Cessna Skymaster maintenance bill, he's grown significantly more enthusiastic. He has made it through most of the **US Navy Fighters** campaign, in fact. Herewith a few comments from him on **Marine Fighters**, by way of sample of how The Other Half (you know, the ones with real lives and no time for computer games?) lives:

El Bratwurst:

I offer below a few pithy comments on **US Navy Fighters** and **Marine Fighters**. Bear in mind that I have the attention span of a fourteen year old and that there may be capabilities I've not yet explored.

As Kelley (my wife) will testify, I've spent hours and hours on **US Navy Fighters**. After having flown 9 million of the 10 million missions in same, and finally getting shot down once and for all (by hitting the wrong key), I'll be damned if I'm going to grind through the first 9 million missions again to find out what the last million are like [now this is the way they think in the real world]. I know that being able to jump back in isn't realistic, but hey guys, this isn't reality, so ease up a bit. I wouldn't be surprised if many **US Navy Fighters** gamers stop using the program at this point for similar reasons.

As a super-cool helicopter, single, multi-engine and instrument rated pilot, I find that flying the sim is far more realistic when you remove the cockpit image [major surprise for Crunch to hear]. When you're flying in the real world (the one beyond the CRT, remember?) you glance briefly at the instruments for a cross-check, but your regular focus actually lies well beyond the cockpit (except when IFR). I find the sim feels far more realistic without the cockpit and with just the few relevant popup screens you want to supplement the HUD (radar, nav, target view).

The slew capability for looking around in **US Navy Fighters/Marine Fighters** is simply "mahvelous." But what is "mahvelous" can be improved upon. You become lost in space slewing between your 2 o'clock and your 5 o'clock position; you have no reference as to where you are looking relevant to the aircraft. This becomes critical in trying



Eh voila! A near-finished wire-frame model. Count the polygons for optimizing purposes

to shoot from the C130 gunship out the side. Some form of continuous reference to perspective would be most useful, maybe just a carrot that rotates around the perimeter of the screen to show where you are looking, 12 o'clock at the top, 6 o'clock at the bottom, etc.?

One method I have tried to use to overcome the slew problem is to use the "Other View." I'll set up the front HUD view in the "Other View" so that I won't totally lose control of the aircraft while slewing around. Unfortunately, the HUD and other front details get lost in "Other View" so it only serves as a crude artificial horizon.

As the missions become more complex, it would be nice when replaying a prior shutdown to have the option to jump back into the flying portion of the flight more expeditiously, rather than grinding through the whole flight plan, select aircraft, arm aircraft, etc. cycle. I can see the logic of trying different aircraft/arming combinations, but it would still be a nice option to be able to jump back into the aircraft without a loss of momentum.

Maybe I'm just a boob, but with **Marine Fighters** it seems that I don't stand a chance of survival. Maybe it's just the shock of that first mission. A test I haven't tried yet is to let the whole mission play on automatic and see what strategy works. Even on the preprogrammed missions it might be nice to be able to adjust the expert level a bit if you're getting clobbered.

Last but not least, there appear to be a few glitches. In particular, when flying the Harrier in the "test" mission, while in **US Navy Fighters**, when transitioning from the top of one building to another in a hover, the system seemed to lose track of where it was: approaching the top of the second building to land in a split micro-second I was flat on the ground 500 feet below.

Oh god, Apache just arrived, gotta run!

Bro

It's always interesting to hear from people out there who haven't had a lot of time to build up expectations for a PC-based flight sim. Many things we (meaning hard-core gamers, designers, publishers, etc.) take for granted either don't matter, are overlooked, or not understood. Other things we don't care about turn out to be rather significant. Air combat sims are probably one of the hardest kinds of designs to do "right," if only because the market for them is so difficult to figure out. Would be great to hear from more of you out there about your favorite/least favorite aspects of the genre; all too often both players and designers get caught up in assumptions which are, shall we say, a little provincial in focus – I'm as guilty as the next of you there.

And then there's BAO's upcoming **Flight Simulator Flight Shop**, an awesome project for flight simulation if there ever was one. Imagine a system which will allow you to basically take **Flight Simulator 5.1's** flight model and aircraft graphics design apart almost completely and put it back together again. Humpty Dumpty never had such a great time! Well, you don't actually get to dissect **FS**, but you do get to be in on all the hard work that goes into representing an aircraft both graphically (in 3D wireframe modeling) and in the flight modeling. Unlike anything that's ever come before, **FSFS** gives its users insight both into the art of 3D modeling



Marine Fighters

and the science of flight dynamics and flight model design in a simulation.

The cost of that insight has got to be not only a steep learning curve (though the large manual is quite thorough) but also recognition that the design of a single aircraft could take literally months of hard, painstaking work. **FSFS** is definitely not for the faint of heart – if you're a veteran model-builder, however, or want to learn a bit about computer-aided 3D design, this is an incredible value for the price, and gives you a full set of tools competitive with systems costing ten times as much. **FS** fanatics will see an ultimate dream significantly realized here – **FSFS** makes **Flight Simulator 4.0's Aircraft & Scenery Designer** look like an inadvertent sneeze by comparison. I've heard rumours about people who'd be willing to pay literally hundreds of dollars just to see a copy of the early beta I'm looking at right now. Sorry, disks go right back to BAO when I'm finished prattling on here!

To sum it up quickly, as you can see from the screenies **FSFS** is set up to take you through the design of parts, structures, flight models through to testing, painting of panels (via Windows' Paintbrush, or another utility if you'd like to use something more extensive – the shareware **Paintshop Pro** is highly recommended, for instance), incredibly detailed elaboration of specs and flight model, full documentation in blueprint and text form of all of the above, to testing and then final building of the completed aircraft. Whew! I would estimate conservatively that it'll take the average user about a month to learn the system, about 3-6 months to construct a complete, sophisticated aircraft based thoroughly on real-world specs with all 3D and graphics details laid in, and then another few weeks of testing and tweaking. But then, voila! – what a joy, to have something you've created yourself, with such sophisticated tools, to share with others. And imagine, given all the energy and creativity surrounding **FS** out there, what you'll have in-store in various on-line libraries in a year or so. We could see virtually every plane out there put together over time. Time will reveal the strengths and limits of the system.

But wait! there's more. **FSFS** also includes a full, sophisticated **FS** Adventure system, which basically gives you a massive database of airports, runways and routes, allowing you to construct sophisticated routes with goals and plans to rival those in **ATP** and/or the Embry-Riddle guys' *Flights of Mike* series of books. In fact, I hope someone out there will take those books and see what they can do with them and **FSFS** – could produce some spectacular results.

Anyways, you can see I'm drooling over this thing, and it's still in early beta. Save some spare time for the hobbyist/modeler in you and plan on some serious work ahead. Never has "under construction" sounded like such an appealing idea. Now all we need is **FS Network**, eh?



Steve Wartofsky

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Reader Service No. 81

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call upon, and with one finger you vent retribution

on every shiny dark destructive heart.



Air Combat Advisor: Intermediate Marksmanship

In the most basic terms, fighter aircraft are flying gun platforms. Learning to make gun kills is really learning to fly. As you know, as an air combat pilot, among other things, your job consists of flying your aircraft to a favorable position so you can fire your weapons at your target. Of course, there are favorable positions and then there are more favorable positions. Knowing just what is a favorable position depends on three things; what you're shooting (weapon), what you're shooting from (aircraft), and who you're shooting at (target). Good marksmanship is sometimes described as "shooting well." As you're about to see, the above three criteria are the backbone of good marksmanship.

Guns, guns, guns!

The gun and the cannon have been primary air combat weapons since the beginning of air warfare, and they remain so to this day. There was of course the exception during the Vietnam era, when someone decided that the F4 Phantom did not need a gun. It was reasoned that since the enemy would be killed at long range with the Phantom's missiles, a gun wouldn't be necessary. Looking back, we now all know what a mistake that was. While missile deployment falls technically under the category of marksmanship (after all, it's just a big, self propelled – and sometimes smart – gun round), it really deserves a separate discussion. We'll stick with guns and cannons for now and leave missiles for another time.

In the days before lead computing gunsights became available (around the middle of WWII), pilots relied on their skill and experience to figure out mentally how much lead was necessary to get hits on their targets. Most prop-based air combat sims model their aircraft with non-lead computing gunsights, so you are left with the same task. While this isn't too difficult to learn, let's discuss some information which will help you increase your hit ratio (bullets that hit compared to bullets fired).

Convergence divergence

On a fighter, guns are generally mounted in one or two of three possible positions. These positions are on the nose, on the fuselage, and/or on the wings. A nose-mounted gun poses the least amount of computational problems, wing-mounted guns the most. This is because a nose-mounted gun generally fires straight in front of your aircraft, whereas wing-mounted guns are usually set so their line of fire converges somewhere out in front of the aircraft. Naturally, where this convergence point is located is very important, since your greatest fire/killing power is where these two or more bullet streams meet. But more importantly, this gives you a way to know exactly where your bullets end up when you pull the trigger. I've seen convergence figures range from as little as 75 feet to greater than 400 feet. Unfortunately, these ranges vary from aircraft to aircraft and even from sim to sim with the same aircraft.

Here is the way to figure out the convergence patterns for your sim and aircraft. While on the



Wing mounted guns are usually set so their line of fire converges somewhere out in front of the aircraft. The problem is the distance usually varies from sim to sim and aircraft to aircraft



The way to judge whether a target is at your optimum killing distance is to use your gun sight. Notice that the wings of the target are about the size of the gun sight. Now you know why gun sights are made to a specific size

ground or flying level, switch to an overhead, external view. Fire your guns and see where your bullets converge. You may have to zoom out the view to see this point. Next, based on the wing span of your fighter, you can roughly estimate how far ahead of you the convergence takes place. Most WWII fighters have wing spans of about 35-40 feet. That means if your bullets converge about three span-lengths in front of your airplane, you can figure the distance to be about 105-120 feet.

Size up your target

Knowing exactly where in space your six .50 caliber machine gun bullet streams meet is good,

but be aware that wing-mounted guns cause another problem. You now have to worry about your distance from target as well as angle-off lead. The way to judge distance is to use your gun sight. Again, while on the ground or from level flight, line up a known airplane in your sights. Switch to the external, overhead view to make sure it's in your kill zone. Switch back to cockpit mode and note how much gun sight is taken up by an aircraft at the optimum guns killing range. Once again, I've seen this vary from sim to sim, so you'll have to do some of your own exploration.

I suppose a good question would be, if wing mounted guns posed so many problems, why



The only sure fire way to disable an airplane is to shoot its engine out



Lead computing gun sights removes the guess work out. This aiming reticle is right on. Point and kill



Depending on the sim, shooting at the cockpit will usually only make the airplane smoke. Fatally shooting the pilot is "hit or miss."

were they so widely used? I think the design choice was mainly made due to the big props found in this era. While the technology for timing the guns to fire in between the prop blades existed, timing for four or six guns was a bigger problem. Other reasons included the desire to carry lots of ammo. Stuffing six guns with a large load of ammo and a big engine in the nose of a fighter just doesn't seem practical. Attempts were made to get around these problems with the P-39 Airacobra. It had a gun that fired directly through the prop shaft. What facilitated this design is the fact that the engine was mounted behind the pilot! Nevertheless, the whole design was only marginally successful; thus wing-mounted guns flourished.

Aim for the right place

As you've no doubt encountered, firing at the right distance and lead angle isn't always enough. You still have to aim for the right areas on your target to get good, fast kills. For instance, you can empty all of your guns into the tail of most aircraft and only get some smoke out of it. It'll continue to fly and generally usually make a nuisance of itself. This is because sim flight models have hit areas modeled as well. Certain areas of an aircraft correspond to greater hit values. To find out where they are, you have to shoot some planes up. I know some of you will probably gasp at this, but what I usually do is shoot down airplanes in my own flight in a training (non-campaign or career) mission. The best way to do this is shoot from a gunner position in a dive or torpedo bomber. You'll usually notice that hits anywhere other than the engine will not result in much damage. This includes shots directly at the pilot. This means always aim for the engine, since every sim correctly models this as a critical area.

Lead computing sights

Most modern era combat sims model lead-computing gun sights. There are generally two types modeled. While both use a CCIP (Continuously Computed Impact Point) type display in the HUD (Heads Up Display), how you use them differs. The easiest to understand and use is the aiming reticle. This type is found in most sims. Just put the "death dot" on your target and pull the trigger. Simple. The other type

is an aiming funnel, like the one found in **Falcon 3.0**. This display computes the bullet path while supplying range information. The wide end of the funnel is closer to you, and the narrow end further away. The trick to using the funnel is to line up your target, pull the trigger and sweep the funnel over it by pulling the nose of your aircraft over the target.

Staying alive

Shooting like an Ace is all fine and dandy, but I think a few words about how not to get shot to pieces when doing so is in order. We touched on this a bit last month. There are basically four possible relative positions two fighters can have with each other. In descending order of danger, there is T2H (your tail toward their head), H2H, T2T, and H2T. Obviously, it is easier and safer to shoot at a bandit when he can't get any shots off at you, as in a H2T situation. Since they'll usually want to shoot you out of the sky also, that scenario will be rare. It is more likely that you'll be faced with making T2T or H2H shots. Generally, the odds are that you'll live

longer if you try and avoid the H2H shoot-outs. This means you'll be making mostly T2T high angle-of-deflection shots. Master them and you will be feared and respected.

Hit ratio

The most sure fire way to increase your hit ratio is to follow the advice of Manfred von Richthofen - a.k.a. The Red Baron. His philosophy was to only attack when you have the clear advantage, and only fire when you're sure you'll get a hit. While this may seem cowardly, you can't argue with his kill record (80 kills). In practice, this is a very boring way to fly air combat sims. There's nothing like getting in the middle of a scrap that you think you may not be able to survive and coming out victorious. That's the kind of stuff we live for, right?! So go to it!

Until next time, a bandit on your tail is better than no bandit at all.



Ben Chiu



Falcon 3.0 uses a non-standard aiming funnel. It gives range info in addition to the bullet path. Don't make things too complicated. Just sweep the funnel over the target. Scratch one MiG-19!

Marine Fighters

In the ongoing effort to expand upon and improve the technology first presented in **US Navy Fighters**, Electronic Arts have offered a combination add-on disk and upgrade in **Marine Fighters**, which features new aircraft to fly, a new campaign theatre, and (finally!) improved support of a wider range of peripherals (most notably, the **CH Flightstick Pro**). **Marine Fighters** not only offers a whole new campaign, but also provides significant improvements to the overall design.

Most immediately noticeable is the new terrain graphics for the Kurile Islands theatre (the main focus of the air combat offered in **MF**). Detail has increased significantly overall, so that the weird combination of heavily-textured-and-shaded aircraft flying in an almost abstract polygonal space has reached a more appropriate balance. The main detail is still reserved for the primary objects – land, sea and air – included in each mission, but it's complemented by better-textured terrain as well. Frame rates have not changed noticeably for any of the available modes (320x200 to 1024x768), a good thing, considering the increase in information being put across. Perhaps least immediately significant but one of the best improvements for playability is an option for larger pop-up windows – like the Large Toolbar Buttons option in many Microsoft products, it makes control of the windows much easier when in 640x480 or above resolutions.

The new craft included in the design – the VSTOL craft (American and British Harriers and Russian Yak-141) and the AC-130A (essentially a heavy transport plane with machine guns) – definitely offer both new flight and air combat tactical opportunities. Both short take-off and landing must be practiced for the VSTOL 'craft, to handle whole missions effectively off the smaller carriers included for the Kurile Islands campaign. The two Harriers can actually be made to hover, and include thrust vector control as well as a flight model to do justice to this peculiarity of performance (by the way, check out the Harrier action scenes at the end of the movie *True Lies* if you're curious about what VSTOL aircraft actually are). Fuel and weapons load limits impact hover and slow-flight performance appropriately for these aircraft, thus necessitating the standard practice of dumping ammunitions and/or fuel just prior to a short landing. The HSI changes for these aircraft as well, when flying in NAV mode,



Surfin' USA

to provide useful indicators for both horizontal motion and vertical climb/sink, critical to handling slow and near-hover flight conditions during short take off and landing.


New weapons particular to the Harriers (and Yak-141) include LAU-10s and LAU-61s, both rapid-firing high-explosive rockets, which function somewhere in between missiles and cannons. Harriers are especially good at using rocket salvos against ground targets (almost like helicopter gunships). The combination of vectored-thrust flight with rocket munitions offers completely fresh technical fight and flight issues to resolve.

The AC-130A is another story, a throwback in some ways to the sixties. It's basically a giant, slow prop plane with a mass of cannons on one side. Its main function is to handle low-level interdiction while circling slowly around a confined area. Try taking it up against some helicopters for a laugh, or set it up as part of a separate flight during a customized mission to handle some air-to-ground while you're focused on air-to-air.

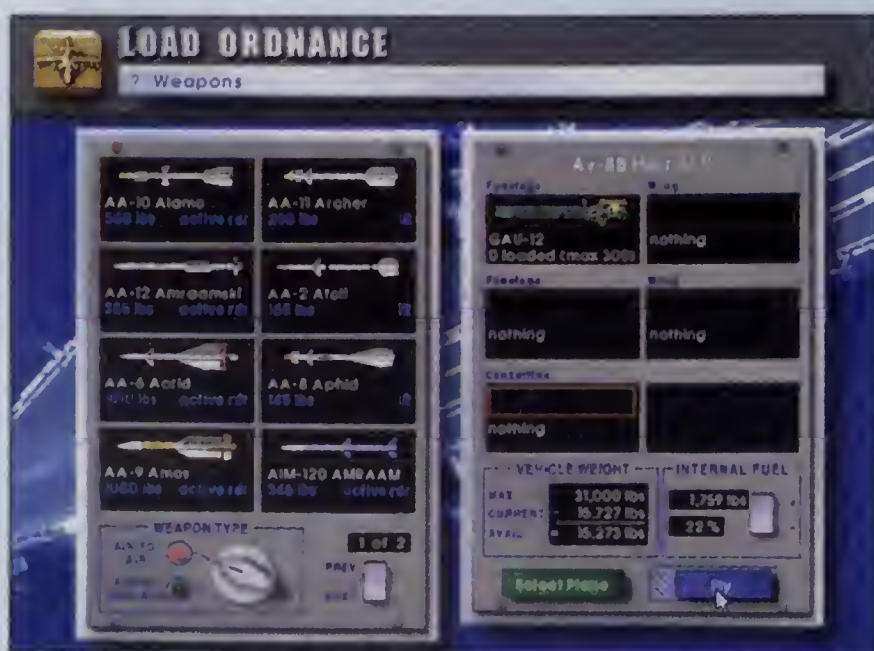
The cockpit graphics for the new planes are different enough to help dispense with some of the limitations of the **USNF** cockpit design. Cockpits in this simulation engine are abstract at best, but the bit-maps for the new planes are at least worked up in detail and with care. It's just a different design philosophy – though less realistic, in some ways the **USNF/MF** pop-up windows approach is more useful during play than a more realistic cockpit design might be. The aircraft graphics are, of course, beautiful to a fault – no-

one else does 3D aircraft modeling as well as Iverson, Grace & Co.

The Kurile Island scenario is itself a valuable inclusion – new terrain to fly over, and a new set of circumstances to deal with. Players who've already struggled all the way through the original **USNF** campaign may breathe a heavy sigh at the thought of fighting through yet another, but take heart – the goals and techniques for success, given the new planes and new terrain, are quite different. Of course, if you wish to use more traditional aircraft in the Kurile Islands (or, concomitantly, VSTOL aircraft in the Ukraine), you can do so using the custom mission builder, which will work with either Kurile or Ukraine terrain equally well. You can also select different aircraft when setting up single missions, giving the **USNF/MF** combination almost infinite extensibility for play.

Marine Fighters adds to an already solid system, and gives an already deep simulation plenty more to work with. The addition of full support for the **Flightstick Pro**, the improved graphics, the new flight models, the new terrain, and a sound and wingie-command system second to none in the industry keeps this engine flying at a time when the competition's really starting to heat up. More, more! Next stop, **Super Fighters** (working title)! 

Steve Wartofsky



Vector take-off practice in a Harrier works best with no extra payload



Let's see if we can get this Hind with a Maverick!



Harrier ready for take-off. Nozzles at -90 degrees, let's hover!

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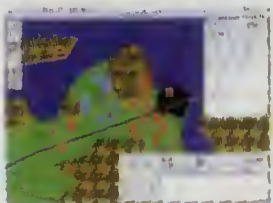
handles world crises, and do something about it. Buckle yourself

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a company of tanks and then blow'em to smithereens, this game is for

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Pacific, through retail and mail order. That way, next time

there's a problem, you can take care of it yourself.



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Reader Service No. 113

MechWarrior 2

Part I - Basic Training

The rotors on the hoverlorry spun up to a high-pitched screech as it lifted from the tarmac and roared off back towards the spaceport. The wind howled and the group of similarly-featured teenagers, dumped unceremoniously in this deserted place, shivered in their cold-weather gear, looking about at their bleak surroundings. Standing before them, as motionless as an icon, was a Jade Falcon warrior. Dressed in a lightweight jumpsuit and heavy boots, he wore an even lighter jacket, his only concession to the harsh, frigid conditions; even so, he had the sleeves rolled up above his elbows. The windbreaker bore a multitude of patches, commemorating the units its wearer had served with, and the places he had been. Scars on his face and exposed arms gave testament to the battles he had fought in. He stood and regarded the cadet Sibko silently, like a predator watching a flock of prey.

Eventually, one of the cadets gathered the nerve to approach the warrior. Snapping to attention, the cadet shouted, "Cadet Sibko Buhallin-438 reporting for training, sir!"

The warrior's arm became a blur and then the cadet was on the ground, unconscious, with a large, purple bruise starting to form over his left temple. The warrior stepped coolly over the prone form before him and addressed the remaining cadets. "My name is Falconer Greel. It is my task to either make you eyasses into warriors or to break you and release you to a lesser caste. As I can see that you are not worthy of the warrior caste, I think I shall break you.

"Your first lesson is that you will never respond to me or address me in any way. If I give you an instruction requiring a response, you will speak as if to the wind. For that is what I am, the cruel wind of this place, which will either teach you what you are to learn or destroy you. Probably both, from the looks of your pathetic selves. When your sibkin awakes, you will pass this lesson on to him.

"Welcome to Ironhold, freebirths. Now, pick up your friend and follow me."

Cockpit Controls Training Class

At ease, cadets. As we have a great deal of material to cover today, I suggest you pay attention and I'll dispense with the usual beatings and get right into the lesson plan.

Before you, you will find your Universal Cockpit Simulator. Within the confines of this device, we can simulate any BattleMech currently available to our Clan, as well as virtually any combat situation. While these are mere toys to a real Warrior,



A well-protected factory is a happy factory

these will allow you eyasses to familiarize yourself with the controls of a BattleMech before you are actually provided with one. Climb into your simulator and adjust the controls so you can access them easily.

The controls of a Clan BattleMech are almost completely re-configurable. This is yet another example of the Wisdom of the Clans, *quiaff?* This allows a unit to perform virtually any role by simply reconfiguring the cockpit to suit its mission. For example, if your mission is to inspect buildings in enemy-held territory, you can place the sensor toggle in a more convenient place, while it would normally be ignored for a more useful feature such as enhanced imaging on a straight combat drop. This can give you a vital edge; so I encourage you to remember to always review your cockpit controls prior to dropping. The less time you spend fumbling about the cockpit for some vital control, the more effectively you will perform your duties. Your system can save up to four configurations.

As a basic configuration, I prefer to slave my torso to the rotation of a trackball unit. I key the

throttle to the up and down keys on the keyboard unit, with directional control determined by the horizontal arrow keys. I then configure the various targeting and viewscreen features to these very same keys, but coupled with the <Control>, <Shift> and <Alt> keys. This allows one hand to perform virtually all the tasks necessary during combat, while the other hand handles the targeting and firing of weapons.

Remember, the default configuration of your cockpit was determined by members of the technician caste, who have certainly never been in combat. You would be wise not to trust their judgment.

Now, select and fire a weapon. Notice the heat bar at the bottom of your Heads Up Display (HUD). BattleMechs generate heat when they fire their weapons and to some extent while moving. This heat is dissipated to the surrounding environment by heat sinks, whose efficiency may be increased or decreased by environmental conditions. When firing heat-producing weapons repeatedly, the temperature of your BattleMech will rise, and systems will begin to shut them-



Drawing a bead on that tender back armor...



Don't let that Wolf get away with his villainy!



More evidence of Clan Wolf's depredation

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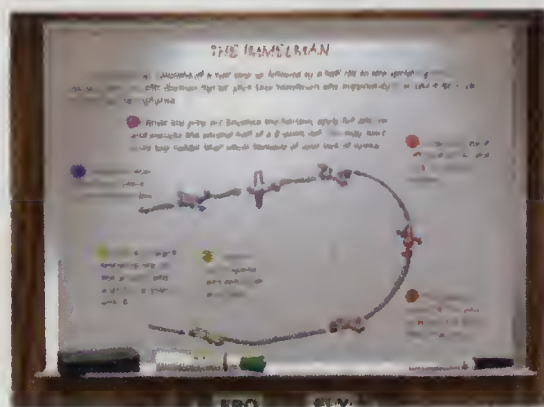
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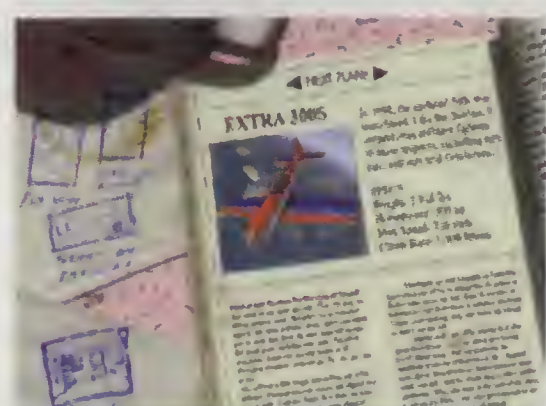
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*-Mike Goulian
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486 DX-66 or higher recommended. MS DOS 5.0 or higher, 8 MB RAM and CD ROM required. Multiple SVGA modes and customizable display options for optimal performance.
Full support for a variety of peripherals including control yokes, joysticks, rudder pedals and VR headsets.



Using fire to draw the enemy away from the factory

selves down in order to avoid damaging their components. You must therefore be aware of your BattleMech's heat level at all times. Should you allow your BattleMech's temperature to rise to a point where the engine shuts down, you will be easy prey and bring great dishonor upon the Clan. A chart detailing how much heat each weapon generates can be found in your manual, — but I am sure you have already memorized it, *quiaff?*

One important tool in managing your heat is proper weapons allocation. There are several philosophies on this subject. Some Warriors prefer to slave all the weapons of a particular range to one trigger, thereby conserving short-range ammo when engaging long-range targets. Others prefer to place weapons so they can maintain a steady rate of fire for long periods of time, recycling one tic while firing the other. Others simply like to move high-heat producing weapons to an unused tic so they won't be fired except in dire emergencies. Each of these philosophies are valid, and will be more useful to you when you consider them in the context of the mission you are to perform. For your first few missions, I would expect you to engage your targets at closer ranges due to your inferior targeting skills, so you would be wise to consider a heat-management approach. Hold your fire and move in an evasive manner until you close the range, then destroy your opponent while his BattleMech is hot and his weapons are cycling.

BattleMech Pilot Training

Now that you have been fully educated in the proper configuration of your BattleMech's controls, you are ready to take your place in the real thing. No, you freebirth, we are not going to give you a Dire Wolf yet, you will pilot a Firemoth and be happy with it!

Your first few training missions will be rather simple; just follow your instructor's orders to the letter and you will be fine. I warn you, do not anger your instructor. He has a very short temper. Rather than bore you with the details of this training, I will leave it to you to discover these courses in due time. I strongly recommend that you complete the training before attempting any missions.

After completing your cadet training, you will be assigned missions; in order to prepare you for this eventuality, we will now take a walk-through of a sample mission. Activate your simulators and select the mission entitled Arkham Bridge. This is a very simple mission, but it will enable us to explore several aspects of solo combat.



Do not engage the BattleMechs at the village. Move on to protect the factory

After you are dropped on the planet's surface, you should perform a systems check and go through the following checklist:

- Get your bearings and assess your current situation. This involves not only targeting your first nav point, but also checking your radar and satellite screens for enemy activity. Not all drops are made in safe territory. If the enemy is nearby, you will have to decide whether or not to engage. Remember, your duty is to your Clan, not your personal glory.
- Configure your weapons. You should have decided how you would configure them prior to dropping. You might also select light amplification or enhanced imaging at this point, should you need it.
- Move on to your first objective. If you have starmates, you should also re-assess your formation at this time.

Having completed the above checklist, you will see that your first nav point appears to be inside a mountain range. If you switch to satellite view, you will observe that there is a pass through the mountains. You will navigate this with all haste and eventually come upon a farming village, where members of our laborer caste are being destroyed systematically by members of Clan Wolf. You could take this opportunity to mete out cruel retribution to these *surats*, but in doing so you will lose your primary objective, which is to defend the factory complex. Select the next nav point and begin moving towards it at full speed.

As you make your move towards the factory, the Wolves will break off their attack on the village to strike at you. This reveals an important tactic. Often you can lure your enemy away from a target by presenting yourself as a more attractive target. You may wish to trade a few shots with the Wolves at this point, but do not allow them to slow you down. You must get to the factory; you

shall see why as you draw near.

When the factory comes into view, widen your radar scan and you should see more Wolf BattleMechs attacking it. You must attack these 'mechs at your earliest opportunity. Observe how they will attempt to continue their mission even though they are taking your fire. The other units will attempt to draw you away so that their starmates can complete the destruction of the factory. This is where the superior discipline and genetic heritage of a Jade Falcon warrior will show its mettle. To defend the complex successfully, you will need to keep the enemy BattleMechs disoriented and concentrating on you. Fight like the namesake of our Clan, shifting targets and striking mercilessly until they begin to fall apart.

Very well. I see that Falconer Greel is ready to march you the twenty-five kilometers back to your barracks, so this concludes this afternoon's instruction. In our next session we will discuss teamwork, and begin examining the various BattleMechs and their individual capabilities. Class dismissed.

Nick Svolos



It's Miller Time

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AIR POWER

BATTLE IN THE SKIES

Apache

Avoiding the ground and other obstacles in I-Magic's Apache

To the delight of combat chopper sim fans everywhere, *Digital Integration* has released the sim with the most realistic helicopter flight model yet: **Apache: The Combat Helicopter Simulation**. While there is an arcade flight model option, just about everyone should fly the realistic model. The realistic flight model is "harder" to fly because it mimics a helicopter and all the quirks real helicopter pilots and students have to deal with. If they can deal with it, there really isn't any reason why you can't also, if you're willing to devote some effort to doing so. Just take it like they do — a little at a time. The advantage of spending the time to learn to fly the realistic model is that it'll allow you the freedom to fly some of the more, shall we say, "non-standard" sim maneuvers such as rolls, loops, and torque turns. The advantage of being able to perform these maneuvers (besides being really cool) won't be obvious until we start talking about the combat sections of **Apache**. For now, let's first concentrate on getting up in the air and reducing the likelihood of the ground being your worst threat. But first, I think (what seems like) the usual word about the "look and feel dilemma" is in order.

Hog and bog...again

It seems that with every new recent sim released, a persistent concern appears. Do I run it with all the detail turned up so the flight section feels bad, or do I turn off some or all of the detail so the flight seems smooth? Well, if you're into combat more than sightseeing, go with the smooth frame rate. Fortunately, **Apache's** CPU hunger is by no means the worst out there. In fact, for a modern sim, **Apache** is quite good in that respect. However, for those of you with slower 486s, you may be happy to hear that **Apache's** CPU appetite isn't totally graphics based. So, you have a solution (or at least a choice) of what you want to cut down on.



There's nothing quite like buzzing the tower in a helicopter...while inverted!



Auto hover is available by pressing "O" when flying at less than 10KIA. If you are using an analogue joystick for collective, it will over ride auto hover if your setting is too far off

Some of the "bog" on a slower machine can be attributed to sound generation. If you run the sound selections on the lower settings, you'll be able to increase the visual detail and still maintain frame rate (your mileage may vary). As with all PC-oriented designs, DMA transfer can prove a major hit on overall system performance; keep that in mind as you tweak. Fortunately, with a 75Mhz Pentium or faster, the issues virtually disappear.

Effective collective

The collective is a combination engine throttle and rotor pitch control. As you increase the collective, you increase downward thrust from the main rotor blades. Simple, right? Well, the realistic flight model complicates things a bit. In realistic mode, it is possible to over-torque the engine. While you can overtorque the engine up to 130%, you can't do so for more than a couple of seconds.

HUDs up

As is the case with real Apache pilots, your virtual helmet comes equipped with an Integrated Helmet And Display Sight System (IHADSS). It's just a fancy name for a helmet-mounted HUD (Heads Up Display). On the left side of the HUD, slightly above center, is the torque indicator. Note where it is, because you'll be looking at it quite often. In addition to the torque indicator, the communications data panel (the upper right hand corner of the instrument panel) will give you another visual message when

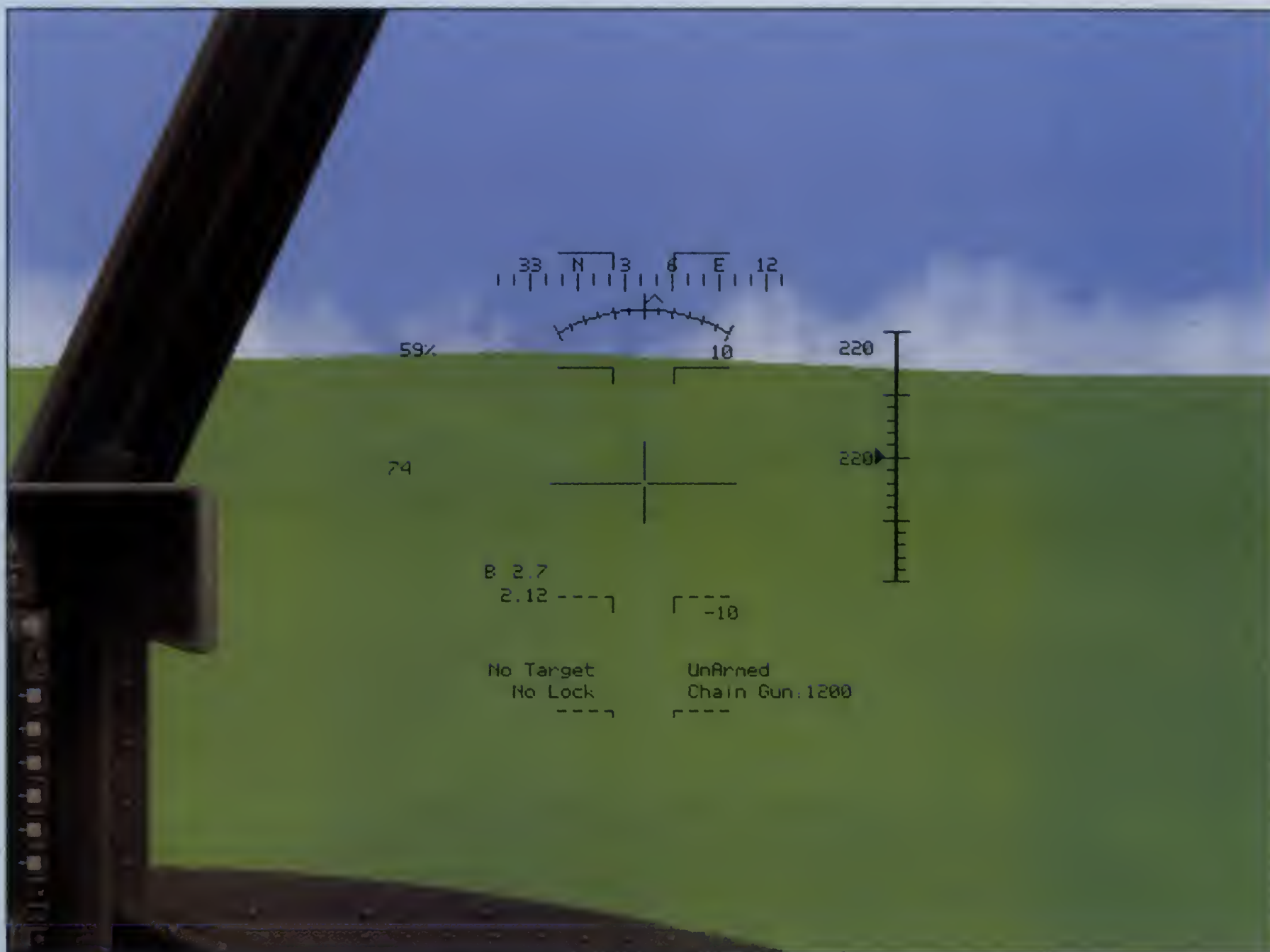


Doing loops for fun over the barracks goes over real well with the CO

you've gone into an overtorque condition. If you're too busy looking at other things, **Apache** provides an audio over-torque beep warning. Anytime you go over 99% torque, the beeps will start and the visual message on the data communications panel will appear. Until you become more proficient at flying helicopters, if you keep the torque setting (via the collective) at or below 99%, you can usually leave it there and not have to worry about it as long as you're not doing anything very demanding.

Hardware heaven (for TQS owners only)

I highly recommend a separate throttle joystick such as the *Thrustmaster TQS (Throttle Quadrant System)* as opposed to using the keyboard for collective control.



The Apache Integrated Helmet And Display Sight System (IHADSS) provides important flight information no matter which cockpit view you use



Torque turns are good for a few laughs also. Yeeehaaa!

Set your **TQS** for analog running, as it makes the collective more responsive and accurate. The way to do this is to tell the **TQS** install program to install the stick as analog, then change the "USE WCS" line in the included .B50 file (on the CD-ROM) to "USE TQS." Next go to the Preference screen in **Apache**, select joystick for throttle and calibrate. In order to use all of the buttons on the **TQS** as the functions listed in that same .B50 file, you'll also need to rename the button identifiers listed from T1 to T3, T2 to T5, T3 to T4, T4 to T9, T5 to T10, and T6 to T2 or leave it as T6 to assign to the range knob switch.

How high am I

The next indicator you need to watch is the altimeter. **Apache** provides two. One is

barometric, and gives your true altitude above sea level (found on the upper right-hand corner of the HUD), and the other is radar based (right, center of the HUD). This radar altimeter is more important to you, as it tells you your exact height above the ground. It does you no good to know your altitude is 3,000' MSL when your height above the ground is 0. When flying up a hill, the radar altimeter will indicate a downward trend. When you see this, you'll know that you'll need to fly higher as you get closer to the mountain. Watching these two altimeters on top of all of the other instruments you need to pay attention to can be overwhelming. Although the real Apache helicopter doesn't have one, the **Apache's** ground proximity alarm will help alert you.

Flying Apache

A helicopter can fly just about in any direction. For the sake of simplicity for our starting discussions, let's just say there are basically two modes. Hover and forward flight (backwards flight is the same as forward, only reversed). Hovering is the harder of the two, although **Apache** has an auto-hover key for you keyboard collective types (more later). We'll cover each, but will start with the easier of the two.

Surf's up, dude

Pushing forward on the cyclic moves the main rotors' thrust backwards. This pushes you forward. However, with the realistic flight model, if you push forward too fast, you'll also lose altitude. I suppose living next

to the ocean in California has something to do with it, but the closest thing I can compare the effects of forward and reverse flight in **Apache** to is surfing. The only difference is that in one case you ride on air, and in the other you ride on water. Imagine you're surfing on a mondo wave in your Apache and you'll see what I mean. If you move the cyclic stick too far forward, you'll move forward at a quicker rate than the wave. Your forward velocity will increase, but you'll move down on the wave and lose altitude. If you pull the cyclic backwards, you'll move rearward and also fall off the wave and lose altitude. Although surfers would love to have the capability to do so, they can't compete with a helicopter. In a helicopter you can compensate by adding more collective while retaining the same altitude, as long as you don't try to go too fast too soon.

Hover

Hovering can be a little tricky, since in actuality, you're basically trying to balance on a column of air. Other than what is listed below, there aren't really any other hints to help you with this other than don't fixate on any one control or indicator. However, if you're using the keyboard for collective control, if you have problems finding the correct collective setting for hover, press "N" when flying less than 10KIA; your collective will thus be set for hover automatically.

VSI

One of the most important indicators for achieving hover or level flight is the VSI (Vertical Speed Indicator). It's just a little arrow on the left side of the altitude scale. If it points above the half-way mark, you're climbing. If it's below, you're descending. Keep the pointer in the center and you'll be maintaining a constant altitude.

Rudder

While you *can* get away with using the keyboard for collective control, the tail rotor is best controlled by a set of rudder pedals like the **RCS (Rudder Control System)** - also from **Thrustmaster**. The **CH Pro Pedals** will do just as well). Keyboard rotor control is limiting. As you know, the tail rotor controls yaw. You press the pedal on the side you wish the nose to turn towards.

Some beginning pilots get confused when it comes to reverse flight. A good way to stop the confusion is to always relate your position to the same location on the helicopter. I use the nose. No matter which way I'm flying, I know right pedal moves the nose right.

Tail rotor operation is simple, right? Well, realistic flight mode again adds some spice. Tail rotor effectiveness is related to airspeed. As your airspeed increases, your tail rotor effectiveness decreases.

Fly fast and very low! More coming up!



Ben Chiu

Flight Unlimited: a course in acrobatics training



Flight Unlimited (FU) is arguably the most hyped and long awaited pure flight sim of the year. Now that it's been in the hands of us ravenous air aficionados for a while and the sheer awe of the beautiful graphics has taken a back seat to the flying, you're probably ready to start honing your flying skills to earn some of the more difficult certificates and break a few Hoops Course records. **FU** is about aerobatics, and aerobatics are about perfecting your flying skills. Rather than writing out step by step instructions for each maneuver, let's discuss some general tips. Later on, we'll discuss some of the common pitfalls found in specific maneuvers.

Practice makes perfect

While **FU** has many features that greatly appeal to the flight sim novice, the advanced atmospheric modeling makes for airplanes that require a little more attention to fly well than what casual flight sim'ers usually put into a sim. As you've probably discovered, you can't

just hop into **FU** and earn all of your certificates. You need to study, practice, practice, practice, study and practice some more. I know it probably sounds clichéd, but there really is no substitute for practice. To quote General (Ret.) Chuck Yeager, "there is no such thing as a natural pilot. Training is everything."

Competition aerobatic pilots strive for perfection, and perfection requires practice. Sorry, there are no quick fixes. Luckily, **FU** looks great, sounds good, and flies so well, you won't mind spending hours punching holes in the sky.

Hit the books

Read the Operator's Manual included in **FU** and study it. It does an excellent job of outlining what you need to know about flight physics, so I really don't need to explain anything that isn't included in the book already. It's all there. However, there are a few tips I can pass along to aid with your flight training and the learning process. As we discuss them,

keep in mind that flying aerobatics well requires many different individual skills. Mastering one or two will not gain you entry into club "Near Perfection." You'll need to master them all reasonably well. Before we go into those, though, a word about hardware is necessary.

CPU Blues

The "look and feel dilemma" rears its ugly head once again. What I'm referring to is the decision that many current flight sims make you face – fly a sim that looks good and feels bad, or feels good and looks bad. Fortunately, **FU** has some middle ground even if you don't have the fastest machine on the market. Its lower resolutions and lower detail settings still look pretty darn good, but in any case, even with the fastest machines, you'll have to turn something down. On a P100 with 16megs RAM and PCI graphics card, I personally find 640x480 resolution with all details set on maximum too choppy to fly comfortably. This of course is a personal preference, so you'll have to decide what "feels" good to you on your machine. What you want is a detail/resolution setting that makes your airplane feel instantly responsive and is able to update your instrument panel gauges smoothly and instantly. No matter what we discuss here, if your system can't keep up with your current detail/resolution settings, you'll always be playing "catch up" and will never fly it well.

The need for speed

Energy management is the most important concept/skill an aerobatics pilot needs to learn and fully understand. The **FU** manual again does an excellent job of describing it. So let's just leave it at this: Kinetic energy is your airspeed, potential energy is your altitude. You convert potential energy into kinetic energy by diving. You convert kinetic energy into potential energy by climbing. The most common mistake made in **FU** – and the one easiest to correct – derives from poor energy management. Since altitude and speed (velocity) can be exchanged for one another (again the basis of energy management) and your flight instructor will require that all maneuvers are made at a reasonable altitude, in order to keep your



The red line on the AI (Airspeed Indicator) signifies Vne (never exceed airspeed). In **FU** you can stretch the envelope a bit and fly faster. However, be aware, Vne in the Sukhoi really means never exceed!



Being smooth is very important because all excess control inputs bleed off speed and energy. This is a vital concept for low Hoop Course times



The big payoff for your efforts will be the ability to perform maneuvers other sims only dream of

energy at its highest, your only real option is to *increase your kinetic energy (airspeed) before the maneuver while maintaining your potential energy (altitude)*. While all maneuvers will generally benefit from this extra energy, high energy-robbing vertical maneuvers will benefit the most. It is far better to be stuck bleeding excess energy near the down side of a loop than to be hanging on the high side of a loop without any. In the simplest terms, this means performing all maneuvers at a higher airspeed than the recommended maneuver entry speed.

How much extra airspeed is enough? Well, that depends on the maneuver. You should also know that there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. Any maneuvers that require initial diving will not benefit as much from extra airspeed as ones that require initial climbing. This is because, in a dive you'll trade off altitude and gain airspeed anyway. However, if you're at maximum airspeed before the dive, diving will most likely cause you structural failures. Not very good for points, but I have to admit it's pretty cool that the instructor screams when your airplane breaks up into pieces!

So what's a pilot to do? Generally, the best advice is to keep as much excess airspeed that you can quickly bleed off if you need to as possible. Flying out on the edge is fine if you can handle it. Here are some tips to help you keep your airplane in one piece and energy-high.

Throttle jockey

Pilots are taught that the throttle controls altitude and the elevator controls airspeed. This is easily illustrated when you're flying cross country and have the time to allow your aircraft to reach equilibrium. However, the whole point of aerobatics is to knock your airplane out of equilibrium and make it do things that it wouldn't normally do, so these same points aren't so obvious in these situations. Such situations can lead many pilots to believe (even if only temporarily) that the throttle controls airspeed and the elevator controls altitude.

If you are flying level and increase the throttle, your airspeed will rise. Aerodynamics tells us that when airspeed rises, so does lift. This means your altitude will change. You will climb. Most pilots subconsciously recognize this and move the stick forward to keep the airplane level. This in turn, increases airspeed. So they begin to think, "if I increase throttle, my airspeed will go up," not realizing that the down elevator they applied actually caused the increase in airspeed. The increase in throttle caused a potential increase in altitude. Down elevator exchanged this potential altitude gain into airspeed.

So, what does this have to do with energy and aerobatics? Your joystick and rudder pedals control your flying surfaces. They more or less need to follow a pattern to perform the maneuvers/patterns in the sky. Your throttle is what must be used to keep your energy up as high as possible in conjunction with what the stick is doing. Sure, there is room to fudge it a



Overstress the airplane and you'll be "on tour." As in, "seen all around the countryside"



Great tailslide... too bad you were trying to do a loop! Carrying a little more airspeed at the start of maneuvers can help you avoid such problems. Don't be afraid to push out the edges of the envelope

bit, and most of the time your throttle will be all on or completely off, but your throttle *will* get a workout in this style of flying. Going back to our example of the max airspeed, high energy initial dive maneuver, since your stick has to follow the pattern, you have no choice but to chop the throttle to avoid breaking your airplane into tiny pieces. Add throttle slowly to keep it near the edge of the envelope, but don't cross over. You'll know when you're close. Your airplane will start to "sing." That's the sign to back off.

Smooth moves

Speaking of smooth, it goes without saying that you need to be smooth on the stick. Actually both sticks – throttle and control. This doesn't mean you won't be making many, many, minor corrections. Just try and be as smooth as possible with them. Of course, it is much easier to accomplish if you have one of the stiffer-

sprung, high quality joysticks like a *Thrustmaster PFCS*, but it's not impossible with others. Being smooth is very important, because as with racing cars, any excess control input bleeds off speed and energy. This is important for keeping your lines clean, energy high, and in the hoops courses most importantly, speed up. Also, if you jerk the stick, you run into a very real possibility of entering accelerated stalls. You may want that for some maneuvers, but be aware of it if you don't.

You also need to be smooth with the application and removal of power. The engines in these high power to weight ratio, short wingspan aircraft can cause havoc with the straight and smooth lines you're trying to create in the sky. However, sometimes torque effects/rolls are desired. In this case, go ahead and mash the throttle through the firewall, but be aware that the Sukhoi engine rotates in the other direction!



Ben Chiu

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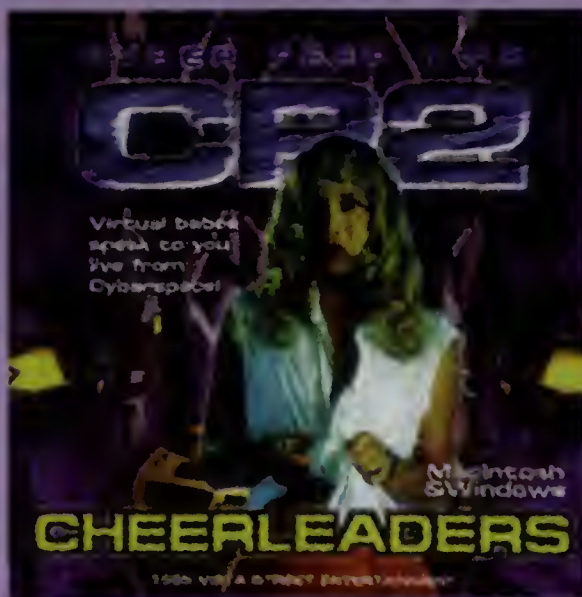
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Reader Service No. 91

Into the soup with Flight Simulator 5.1



Windshear can be a real killer! Watch your pitch and sink rate and don't mix the aluminum with the dirt. The trick is to stay airborne long enough to fly out of it

Of the many challenges to be found in aviation, precise instrument flying is one of the most difficult. When mastered, it is also one of the most rewarding. It is very gratifying to climb up into a two hundred foot overcast, fly for four hours without any visual reference other than the cockpit instruments, and then pop out of a driving rainstorm to see the runway of an airport on the opposite side of the country before you.

While flight simulations of many types are available, Microsoft's **Flight Simulator 5.1** is the only one that allows you to custom tailor weather conditions while practicing your flight procedures. The purpose of this article is to give you a handle on how **FS 5.1**'s variable factors will affect the weather conditions and to show you how to set up certain instrument conditions.

Weather variables

A detailed explanation of weather, how and why it occurs, is far beyond the scope of this article. Entire volumes have been written on this complex subject and are available from various aviation catalogs or at the local library. The support-



The calm before the storm; a bouncing airspeed around 15 knots with the parking brakes set indicates trouble ahead

ing material in the **FS 5.1** handbook is brief and can use a little more explanation, however.

Due to uneven heating of the earth's atmosphere, air temperature varies from place to place. These changes in temperature cause changes in air density which in turn result in changes in barometric pressure. The pressure changes cause motion in the atmosphere in the vertical (currents) and horizontal (winds). If you add moisture to this motion, the result is what we call "weather."

The program will allow you to modify barometric pressure, temperature layers, wind, cloud formations and visibility. Let's take a brief look at each one of these factors.

Barometric pressure is a measurement of the weight of a column of air one inch square that stretches from sea level to the top of the atmosphere. Differences in pressure from one atmospheric area to another cause the air in the atmosphere to flow from an area of high pressure to an area of low pressure. In the northern hemisphere, air descends from the area of high pressure in a clockwise circulation and as it flows into the area of low pressure it reverses to a counterclockwise circulation. As the added air enters the low, it ascends. Descending air (high pressure) generally means good weather, rising air (low pressure) favors the build up of clouds and precipitation.

As we've seen, variation in air temperature causes air flow within the atmosphere, affecting the barometric pressure and the weather. In addition, air temperature will affect your aircraft's performance by altering the density altitude. Simply put, density altitude is pressure altitude corrected for nonstandard temperature variations. Here's an example of how important it is: at an airport 2,545 feet above sea level, with a temperature of 70 degrees and a barometric pressure of 29.70 inches, the density altitude is 4,000 feet. Your aircraft will perform on takeoff as if it were at a much higher altitude than that shown on the altimeter. Even in a jet aircraft like

the Lear found in **FS 5.1**, the decrease in performance can be dramatic. Try a takeoff in Champaign at 101 degrees; you'll see the difference!

Winds are the horizontal flows of air produced by temperature and pressure changes in the atmosphere. They affect the pilot throughout his or her flight, from takeoff to touchdown. Winds can be your friend; a strong tailwind can save you time and fuel enroute to your destination. They can be your enemy as well; a severe windshear on takeoff or landing can end your career as a pilot permanently. **FS 5.1** allows you to simulate both the favorable and unfavorable winds.

Note that the surface winds in the simulation are magnetic; their direction is the same as that shown on your aircraft compass. Winds aloft have direction relative to true north, which is different from that shown on your compass. The variation for a specific location can be found on an aviation chart by reading the numbers on the isogonic lines, lines that connect points of equal magnetic variation. Add west variation and subtract east variation to get a compass heading equal to a true heading. It is a detailed touch in the simulation, but it won't really affect your flying if you pay attention to the instruments.

FS 5.1 gives the user the ability to create detailed sky conditions. You can have up to two cloud layers and one thunderstorm layer in any of three different weather areas. Many different types of cloud are modeled, with variable bases and tops, sky coverage, turbulence and icing capabilities.

Slow Rain a Comin'

Table 1

	Stratus	Cumulus	Cumulonimbus
Base	2000	4000	8000
Tops	3500	8000	15000
Cover	4/8 ths	Overcast	Dense
Deviation	66	500	500
Turbulence	1.5	2	8
Ice	On	On	On

Table 2

Location	Surface	Aloft	Aloft
Type	Steady	Steady	Steady
Base	Depth 49	50	2500
Top	—	2500	1000
Speed	22	55	23
Direction	320	140	110
Turbulence	3	5	2

Table 3

Altitude	0	1500	5000	15000
Temperature	100	95	0	50

ties at your command. The careful selection of your options will allow a realistic workout on the gauges.

Visibility settings are important if you are truly going to practice instrument procedures. Set visibility to low levels for the entire flight so that you must rely on the instruments. The old adage "One peek is worth a thousand cross-checks" is just as true in this simulation as it is in an instrument training aircraft. Besides, if you are looking for that feeling of true accomplishment, flying this sim in the soup from takeoff to a landing 30 minutes later solely with instruments should provide it!

Weather demo setup

Now let's examine the depth of the weather programming in this simulation. We'll takeoff from Champaign and fly up to Chicago's Meigs field. We'll start with a density altitude problem and windshear on takeoff, penetrate a line of thunderstorms and descend through an overcast to an ILS approach and landing.

Select the Options menu, Aircraft category and select the Lear for this flight. Now move to the World menu, Airport category, Chicago area. Highlight Champaign/Willard, Runway 32L airport for your departure point. Go back to the World menu, pick Weather and add a Weather Area named "Willard."

Setting the co-ordinates for your weather area is the most difficult part of this operation. Getting your weather just where you want it takes a little trial and error. *Microsoft* could speed up this



Cumulonimbus; the name alone demands respect! Stay well clear of these turbulent boomers

process immensely by allowing you to outline the desired area on a map. For this sortie, use N40/W88 for one boundary and N42/W87 for the other. Make it 50 miles wide with a 5 mile transition. Set its course at 110 and the speed at 2. These settings will give us a slow moving weather area just north of Willard. Hit the OK button and you'll be back to the weather menu.

Select Clouds and tap the "Create" button. We're allowed two cloud layers plus one cumulonimbus (thunderstorm) layer. Set up your layers like those in **Table 1**.

This will give you an initially VFR departure, transitioning to instruments and breaking out on top into an area of thunderstorms. With that turbulence, you need to give the storms a wide berth!

Now select Winds and create the settings in **Table 2**. Once again, we can have three wind layers.

With these winds, you will experience a noticeable windshear at 60 feet AGL on takeoff. The high altitude winds will give you a little drift problem as you head north. These winds are blowing towards the low pressure area we will set up later, simulating the flow of air from high pressure to low pressure.

We'll quickly set 4 temperature layers that will allow you to experience a high density altitude problem. Select the Temperature button and create the layers in **Table 3**.

The high surface temperature will give you a density altitude of a little over 3000 feet; you will notice a difference in takeoff performance. We've set the 5,000 foot temperature a little unrealistically low, but this will enable icing in the clouds. Leave the Day/Nite option off, with the range at zero.

Barometric pressure can be quickly set at 30.00 to represent the area of higher pressure that is moving southeast out of our area. Don't use the drift feature. Visibility should be set to 4

miles; adequate for our VFR takeoff but low enough to quickly have us on the gauges.

For enroute weather, we'll modify the Global weather settings shown in **Table 4**. Start by selecting the Cloud button. Use these settings to give a solid undercast and a few thunderbumpers to dodge. Add some wind like we have in **Table 5** to give yourself a little trouble following the radial.

These settings will also give you a little tailwind on the way and shorten the time to Chicago.

Temperatures won't be much of a factor on the enroute portion of the flight (**Table 6**).

We'll set the barometric pressure to 29.80, simulating the drop in pressure as we approach the low. We'll keep the visibility at 4 miles to keep the focus on instrument procedures.

Lastly, we'll create another area of truly nasty weather for our approach and landing at O'Hare. Once again, using the World menu and the Weather choice, we'll add a weather area called "O'Hare." The boundaries are N42/W88 and N41/W89, setting 50 miles for width with a 5 mile transition. We'll make it basically station-

Table 4

	Stratus	Cumulonimbus	Cirrostratus
Base	4920	8000	15744
Tops	6888	113500	15760
Cover	Overcast	Dense	7/8ths
Deviation	0	499	0
Turbulence	1.5	8	1.5
Ice	On	On	On

Table 5

Location	Aloft	Aloft	Aloft
Type	Steady	Steady	Steady
Base	1500	13000	22000
Top	1200	21000	33500
Speed	35	34	43
Direction	120	145	155
Turbulence	3	1	1

Table 6

Altitude	0	10000	40000
Temperature	98	45	-36



In the soup! Climbing out to Roberts on the gauges. The clouds you selected allow no visual references until you break out



Over O'Hare, on initial descent. Note the heavy broken deck above the solid undercast. You'll see some of the thunderstorms you built in as you descend

ary by setting a course of 135 at a speed of 1. Click OK to return to the weather menu.

By now you are familiar with the cloud setup procedure, so enter the layers in **Table 7**.

These settings will require some dodging of thunderstorms, an instrument let down and an ILS approach to O'Hare.

We'll set up our winds to continue our tailwind but to favor an ILS to runway 14R at the field. Enter the winds from **Table 8**.

Temperatures will remain warm, as Chicago has all summer! Once again we'll set an artificially low temperature, this time at 5000 feet. Remember that a load of ice will seriously degrade your aircraft's performance. Get down to those warmer temperatures quickly (**Table 9**)!

We'll represent our low pressure area with a barometric setting of 28.00 and lower the visibility to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. You'll have to thread the needle on this ILS if you expect to see the lights when you break out.

Trouble for Your Trouble

Table 7

	Stratus	Cumulus	Cumulonimbus
Base	850	2500	8000
Tops	2499	8000	15000
Cover	Overcast	6/8ths	Scattered
Deviation	66	246	499
Turbulence	2	2	8
Ice	On	On	On

Table 8

Location	Surface	Aloft	Aloft
Type	Steady	Steady	Steady
Base	Depth 2500	2800	6500
Top	—	5500	15000
Speed	12	23	24
Direction	120	160	99
Turbulence	1.5	2	2

Table 9

Altitude	0	3500	5000
Temperature	98	87	0



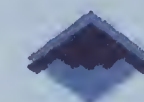
Turning to intercept the inbound radial you'll see solid clouds as well as scattered layers. Hit this radial dead on for an easy transition to the ILS

Into the goo!

Before you take off, remember to save this situation! It takes a while to setup and you may want to use it again. From the Options menu, choose Save Situation. Type in a title and a description if you wish, then enter a file name. Make sure you then choose the options button and specify the options you wish to save; just check them all. Then hit OK. Remember you can modify this situation indefinitely after you select it. It will still be available as the last version you saved. Now we simply pick Situations from the Options menu, select our newly saved weather experience and go fly!

You're in for a bit of work here. Takeoff, climbout direct to Roberts VOR, switch to O'Hare VOR and cruise on up at 13000 feet. Reaching the VOR, descend outbound at O'Hare on the 350 radial to be at 5000 feet about 20 miles out. Turn left back inbound, intercepting the 140 radial and transition to the ILS at about 15 miles. Make a good approach and landing and congratulate yourself.

If you do this right, you will have experienced the performance problems of high density altitude and windshear. You will have made an instrument climbout and broken out on top only to find thunderstorms in your path. You'll make an instrument descent to a low minimum ILS. Do it all correctly and you've got a flight you can remember with pride.



John Nolan



This is why they pay you the big bucks! Hold what you've got and bring it on down. You're passengers will be truly impressed!



Center the needles and park there; with a 200 foot ceiling and low visibility, you're going to have to nail the approach or go around



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Across the Rhine

Across the Rhine (**AtR**) has been a long-awaited MicroProse product, designed to cover World War II tank combat in real-time from either the American or the German side (and yes, the Waffen SS is included). You get to choose your side by clicking on a reproduction of the World War II recruiting posters (the US poster actually shows a tank destroyer, but what the hell). I was not pleased with the box. I expected to have a view of a US tank; instead it was German. If there is a German tank on the cover, it should have been in a Sherman's sights, or on fire. I am a little tired of the current glorification of the German army. I played the US player for the review.

AtR is a complex game. Only buy it if you own a 486 66mhz computer, or faster, and are willing to invest the time to learn the game. Load times will test your patience, even on a Pentium. Like most MicroProse games, **AtR** has thorough historical documentation. Players can follow the race across France in the path of the 4th, 7th, or 10th Armored Divisions or similar German formations.

Unlike most other games, you can step in wherever you want to, from a platoon leader (a sergeant or lieutenant) to a battalion commander (a major). Battlefield success gets you the normal promotions and battles. I really like this feature, because I like to control companies and battalions more than I do single tanks.

Scenario selection is unique. When entering the game, you can select one of the three armored divisions, and an arrow displays that unit's path across France. To begin, you click on the path. The game then proceeds day by day, with a summary of actions in both theaters. Soon, your unit is required at the front and you go to battle.

You may select from a variety of tank-mechanized task forces equipped with some of the many models of the Sherman. As usual, you may select from a variety of categories to make play easier or harder and more realistic. Following acceptance of an organization, you can accept the computer deployment or change it.

The display, combining map and a 3-D view is unique and realistic, and fairly accurately represents what a commander sees. It takes some getting used to, however. There is a "big picture" map at the top left, showing the locations and designations of units on the field. A second, close-up (and zoomable) map reveals a detailed representation of the terrain, and your tanks – without the designations. Unlike **MI Tank Platoon** or **Steel Panthers**, this window only shows platoons, not individual tanks. Yet another window shows the view from *your* tank. While players can hop from tank to tank to have more fun, if your tank gets hit, you're out of the game!

Orders are given from a small window/tool bar. You move the company by selecting the headquarters and selecting waypoints, much as in **Harpoon**. Unfortunately, you can only have four way points, and you only get to issue orders to your headquarters. Your subordinates follow the headquarters in a formation selected from another window. If you are a company comman-

der or below, you don't get to issue orders to any but your own units. Again, this is realistic, if a bit primitive in a game of this scope.

Calling for artillery and air support is accomplished from yet another window. If artillery is available then a marker appears, and the artillery falls on the target. In **AtR**, it is important to remember to place the artillery where the target will be when the artillery lands – only experience will be able to tell you exactly where to put it.

The first person tank view is easily the most frustrating part of the game. The window is small, and apparently does not correspond to the map display scale (and there are no plans to fix it). I found this view very distracting. I couldn't make it big enough to be able to see the battlefield clearly, and turret control is less than satisfactory, to say the least; I finally just minimized the window. I have yet to get into a tank-to-tank fight.

Most troublesome is that the 3D first-person view is only out to 200 feet, thus virtually negating any real-time tactical combat. Granted, WWII tanks didn't have the range of an M1 with its targeting computers, but still, 200 feet is way short.

Worse than that, the 3D terrain – which has been a persistent problem for many of MicroProse's past simulation releases – proves virtually useless for tactics once again. Tanks can fire *through* mountains at opponents, and hit (shades of **F-117A** and **Gunship 2000**). A major flaw, for most players.

Reading the documentation intensively before play is a must. Groping for the operations manual in the middle of a tank duel is not conducive to survival. The control documentation, while extensive, is not as good as it could be; much time is spent over joystick control, for instance, something which suggests more was planned for the first-person approach in the design than culminated after the manual went to print (printing usually happens well before the software's finished, industry-wide). The disjunction between manual and software capability is more severe in **AtR** than usual; though the historical documentation (and included CD video material) is first-rate.

Even after a thorough read, it'll still be hard to keep track of what's going on. This is definitely *not* a command simulation for total control freaks! Many's the time when you'll see units on the map screens go up in flames, with little you can do to respond. More aggravating is the slow, blind, and often stupid response of the AI to command requests – both **Universal Military Simulator II** and **Patriot** excel compared with **AtR** in this respect. **AtR**'s AI is, however, much more unpredictable than either of the other mentioned titles.

Across the Rhine has a very steep learning curve, and requires intense study to master. Put enough time into the game and it could prove very enjoyable, however, despite the flaws. It's certainly an ambitious, if still incomplete, project.



Mike Robel

Designed & Published by: **MicroProse**
Platform: **DOS**



Coordinating input from the variety of maps makes learning **Harpoon II** look like a breeze




While it's not useful for play, the 3D window often features some pretty amazing texture-mapped 3D graphics. Too bad they aren't particularly functional for gameplay




As with previous MPS releases, there's plenty on offer in the scenario and campaign departments



Obviously the company spent a lot of time – too much – reinventing the wheel, or, er, Windows



'THE VAMPIRE PLAYERS GUIDE' "What are we? The damned childer of Caine? The grotesque lords of humanity? The pitiful wretches of eternal hell? We are the vampires, and that is enough. I which must be feared, worshipped and adored. The world is mine, now and forever!" **\$18**




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Preview NHL Hockey '96 EA Sports

When you have the best hockey game on the planet, what do you do for an encore? You take everything that was already good and make it better, which means the yardstick will be raised even higher. Such would appear to be the case with *EA Sports*' latest version of **NHL Hockey**, which, even in pre-alpha form, is just outright better than all of the other hockey games out there.

It starts in the rink. *EA Sports* has now decided to create 3D stadium models for all of their sports games (including the upcoming **FIFA Soccer '96** and **NBA Live '96**) which allows a free-floating camera, instead of the static ones of the past. Overall there are eight different cameras, from behind the net to head cameras; when you switch them the movement is immediate. It's as if the cameras were mounted on cranes; you move the camera from location to location without turning it off. It's a fantastic effect.

In addition to the cameras, the stadiums feature full texture mapping (which can be turned off for slower machines) and both high and low resolution modes. The players are much bigger now, and actually resemble real players (motion capture was used on real hockey players for accurate animation). All of the team logos and jerseys are correct, as are the player numbers (yes, the players are big enough to read their jerseys). The players also cast shadows, which adds yet another level of realism.

As for gameplay, *EA* didn't mess too much with a good thing, but fighting is back in for the pugilist in us all. You can control goalies manually (probably recommended only for those who possess God-like reflexes), and players move as a team with set formations, just like they do in real hockey. Finally, modem play has been added.



The audio throughout the game is CD quality, with a rockin' soundtrack over the interface. The in-game audio is fantastic, with a realistic echo/reverb effect when the puck strikes the boards. The crowd noise is appropriate; there are plenty of "rah rah" chants, and the announcers now call players by name rather than jersey number.

NHL Hockey '96 should be out just in time for the next hockey season.

Steve Bauman

Preview Hardball 5 Accolade

Already? It seems like it was just yesterday we fired up **Hardball 4** for the first time, and now the boys of summer at *Accolade* have already fired off another **Hardball**. The fifth version of this arcade classic, cleverly called **Hardball 5**, promises to include more simulation technology in the design, hopefully not at the expense of pure arcade fun.



The most noticeable visual change to the design is that the designers have placed the camera view closer to the plate when you're batting. This makes those digitized players mighty big, with more fielder animations planned. The game will come with all 28 current stadiums, as well as 12 classics of yesteryear.

Included are over 50 new statistical categories (planned), 40-man rosters, active and disabled lists and minor leagues. There will be 10 skill levels for players, from arcade to full simulation.

With all digital music, the eternally popular Al Michaels calling the action, all of the 1995 MLBPA players and the smooth arcade action that this series is known for, look for **Hardball 5** to at least be a ground rule double when released around World Series time.

Steve Bauman



Review Picture Perfect Golf Lyriq International

Taking an innovative approach to the computerized golfing game is *Lyriq International's* **Picture Perfect Golf**. Not content with plunking animated course representations on the screen, **PPG** goes for the full pull, giving armchair golfers actual photography through which to ply their hobby. There's no heavy animation here – instead gamers will see picture after picture of a real life championship course.

But this isn't the only area in which **PPG** distinguishes itself from the horde of golfing sims – this game also introduces us to "virtual golf." Whether to negate the work and expense of building an animated on-screen golfer, or as a purposeful attempt to create a first person perspective remains unknown, but **PPG** lets us view proceedings from the eyes of the player. With real photos and a new perspective on things, **PPG** gameplay is both interesting and quite unusual.

It's all very noticeable right from the very first swing. There is no miniature duffer on screen swinging away to the gamer's instructions, and the striking visual reality of actual photography on each fairway and green will be oh so impressive to veterans of other golfing products.

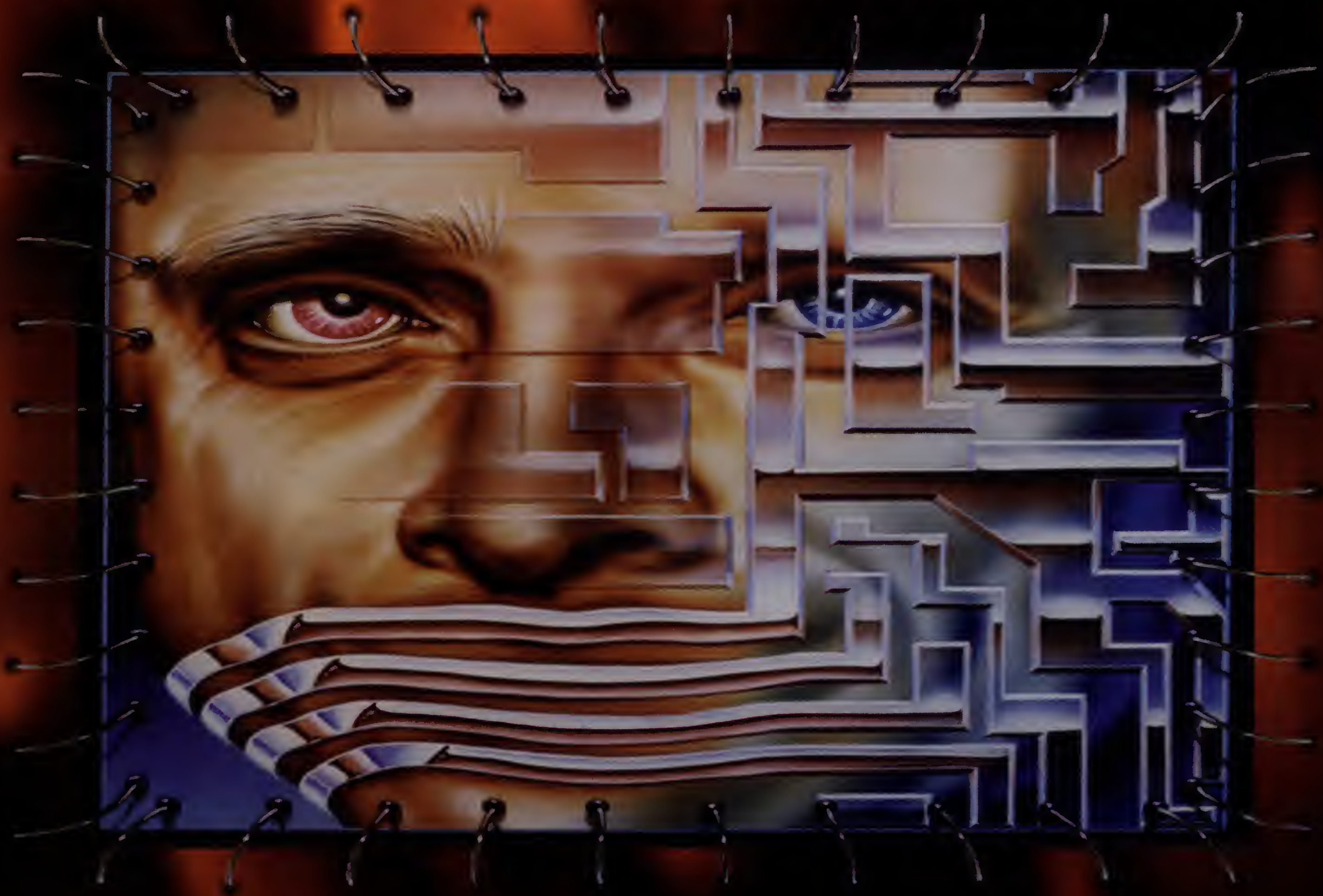
The sheer number of photos is quite impressive, taken from virtually every spot a ball could possibly end up. I found that even a slight variation in ball lie brought up a different picture, and that's why nearly 400 MB of CD space is usurped by the photography of the game's single course, **Hilton Head**. Sadly, 2D photos don't always represent elevation and distance quite as well as animation tricks and textures might, and gamers may well be wishing for a fly-by or a **Links**-like grid here and there. They won't get it.

Shot-making, meanwhile, takes a little adaptation. Although the mechanics don't differ much from games such as **Links** (yes, that means another visit from the infamous "swing indicator"), it is at first somewhat disconcerting to watch a tiny white sphere fly out from the base of an otherwise static image. You won't see the follow-through of two



HARLAN ELLISON

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arms and a club as a lengthy tee shot is attempted, nor is there any mobility to the screen. Yet after a few holes, the whole thing gets to feel pretty natural.

Unfortunately, the real-life photography idea that sets this game apart can also be its downfall. At times, the supposedly 3-D ball flight pattern simply doesn't come off smoothly and realistically within a 2-D background, the ball never actually bounces off objects such as trees, and photography, quite simply, doesn't look as colorfully pretty as cutting edge animation.

PPG does have its own little luxuries, such as head-to-head vs. solo play, post-game printouts, a vocally enthusiastic group of playing partners, and both a driving range and putting green for those who need the practice - like me. PPG is also compatible with infrared golf clubs for those who just can't go golfing without some real motion, and of course, club selection, a wind indicator, and top views of each hole are present and accounted for. Finally, those 280+ yard drives that have become almost commonplace to **Links** pros just aren't as easy to come by in the PPG environment, making this a more challenging exercise.

Although PPG ships with but one course, *Lyria* plans to make add-on courses available every three months or so, and **Coeur d'Alene** is the first to make an appearance on store shelves. Remember, there will be no fantasy courses here, as it's darn difficult taking photos of something that simply does not exist.

In real life, The Coeur d'Alene is regarded as one of America's most breathtaking courses. Surrounded by mountains and on the banks of Lake Coeur d'Alene, it's a stunning, but not overly taxing facility.

In PPG, **Coeur d'Alene** is much the same, with wonderful photography doing as much justice to nature as can be expected from a 2-D picture. As is the case with Hilton Head, PPG ball flight mechanics and depth of field perception range from questionable to fairly good, but if PPG is your game, **Coeur d'Alene** should be on your shopping list.

It's a fairly mundane opening to be sure, but mid-course **Coeur d'Alene** is chock full of memorable holes. Hole Six features a raised tee, sunken green, and a backdrop of lake and mountains for a truly awe-inspiring sense of elevation that translates well to the PPG world.

The 11th hole features a creek framed green, the 13th *two* shots over water, while the 14th's floating man-made green must be considered one of the most unusual golfing experiences on earth. In real life, a successful tee shot on the 14th means the golfer is ferried to the island for his final shots, and I found it disappointing that this procedure was not somehow visually depicted in the program.

Nevertheless, **Coeur d'Alene** sports a sense of drama that was somehow missing at Hilton Head. Remember, you need the original PPG program to get on course at **Coeur d'Alene**.

Gordon Goble

Review Rugby World Cup 1995 EA Sports

There was a flood in 1995. It was a people flood, and it drained out in South Africa, as Rugby fans the world over took the trek to the site of this year's World Cup.

An immensely popular game in most earthly nations, Rugby, like soccer, has splashed up against North American soil, only to be beaten back by home-grown sporting pursuits. That's a shame, because once the basic fundamentals of "Rugger" are understood, it makes for one hell of an entertaining spectacle.

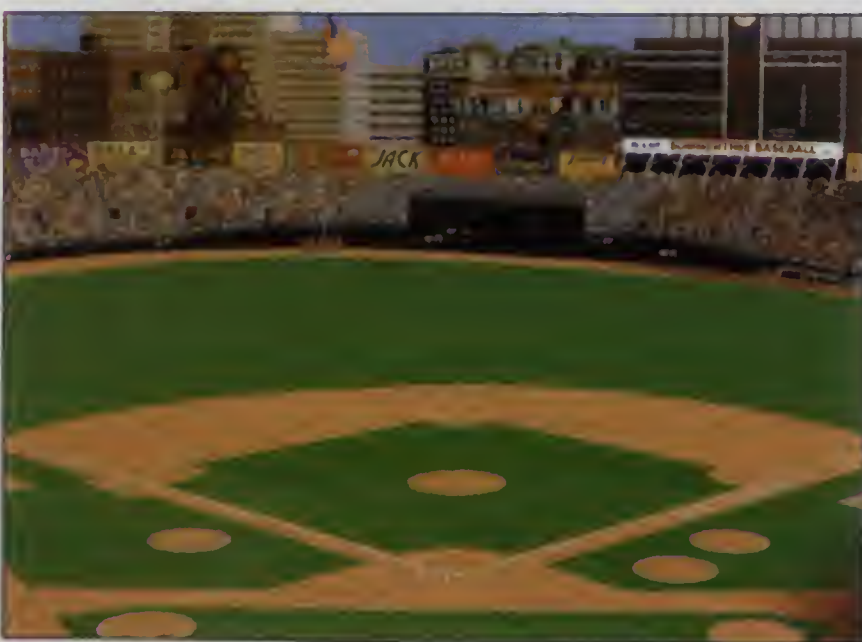
Rugby is a "pure" sport, played in rough and tumble fashion on a grassy field by sturdy young men who dare to wear no padding, and *Electronic Arts* has successfully brought its visual and tactical joys to the computer with **Rugby World Cup 1995**. To be sure, **Rugby** is a little rough around the edges, and there really isn't much in the way of direct competition, but sport sim fans with the will to learn (football addicts in particular) may well get caught up in this very playable representation.

Looking a little like some soccer sims we've come to know and love, **Rugby** features a panning ball-following camera which provides a diagonal view on happenings up and down the field. Player control involves a tricky but ultimately rewarding manipulation of both gamepad/joystick and keyboard keys, and this will extend the learning curve even further for those unfamiliar with basic game rules and strategy. When it all finally comes together, get ready for some late nights and hard tackles.

Rugby features small but very realistic 3-D animated players who are both intelligent and quite variable in their movements. I won't go into a complete dissertation on the whys and wherefores of the sport, but suffice it to say that **Rugby** artificial intelligence is quite good, with on-screen participants kicking, passing and running the ball when they should. Even without the ball, players behave with admirable smarts, lining up, "marking" the opposition, and moving to open space for counter plays at the appropriate times.

Within a few hours, **Rugby** had me thoroughly addicted, while giving me an appreciation for the game that neither television or live exhibitions have been able to do. Mucks, serums, line-outs, tactical kicking and back-passing are all here and sensibly enacted. The game moves quickly and so does the computer opposition so those who think they won't need to learn all the intricacies of ball movement are dead wrong.

Set kicking plays, such as kick-offs and conversions bring up a "kicking meter" that works like the **Links** "swing meter", and it all combines to force the gamer to really consider what gets clicked or depressed at any one time. Does the action get feverish? You bet.



Rugby, marketed as the only official World Cup 1995 simulation, showcases the sixteen teams and players that qualified for this year's big event. Each team and player is evaluated in a total of eight categories: kicking, running, stamina, passing, strength, weight, tackling, and an overall rating. Newcomers would be well advised to command a powerhouse squad such as South Africa, while choosing, say, the Ivory Coast as an opponent, since everyone certainly behaves as advertised.

On the field, jerseys are colored appropriately but are not numbered, so how does one tell the greats from the pretenders? Fortunately, **Rugby** has an announcer who not only mentions players by name, but offers some keen insight into just about every occurrence as well. He got a little too keen for me, when, just after I had mistakenly instructed my man to attempt a scoring kick from his own 22 meter line, he informed the crowd in his most cynical British style that it was "Astonishing to have tried a penalty kick from that spot."

When a game has you throwing your arms in the air and cheering in concert with its digital crowd, its programmers have done something right. Such is the case with **Rugby World Cup 95**.

Gordon Goble

Preview Old Time Baseball Stormfront Studios

Just how would Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb and Ted Williams have fared against, say, Randy Johnson's 100 MPH fastball? We'll never *really* know, but *Stormfront's* upcoming stand-alone game **Old Time Baseball** will allow you to simulate such encounters [note: **Tony La Russa 3** would be required to import statistics for Randy Johnson and other current major leaguers].

This is a fantastic idea for a game. They've taken the **Tony La Russa 3** engine and added 12,000 historical players (every team and player from 1871 through 1981) and plunked them down in painstakingly detailed renderings of sixteen old stadiums (taken often times from the original blueprints).

A new feature called the *Time Machine* will allow players to simulate all of the conditions of every baseball era. It will make mathematical adjustments for the changing conditions of various time periods (which would take into account technology advancements in gloves, balls and bats).

The play-by-play will be provided by Curt Gowdy and Mel Allen, and the game will feature numerous period portraits of the players in period style (don't expect every player - some probably don't even have photos in any baseball archives!).

Steve Bauman



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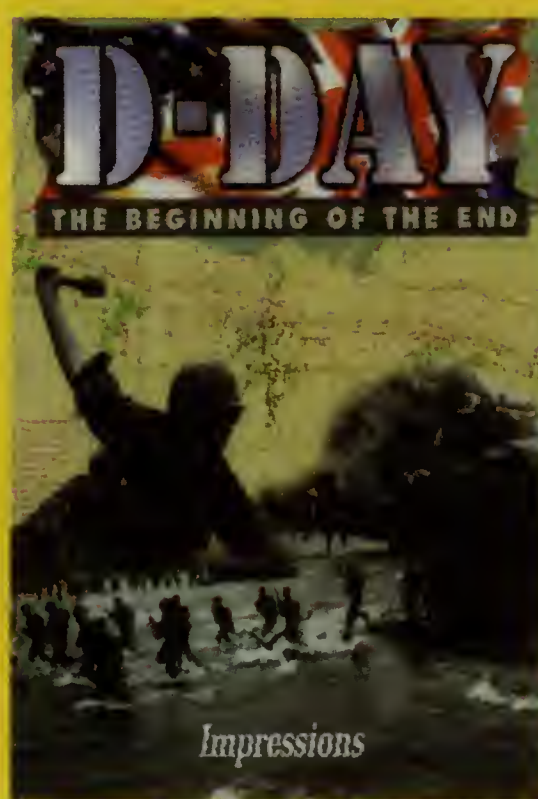
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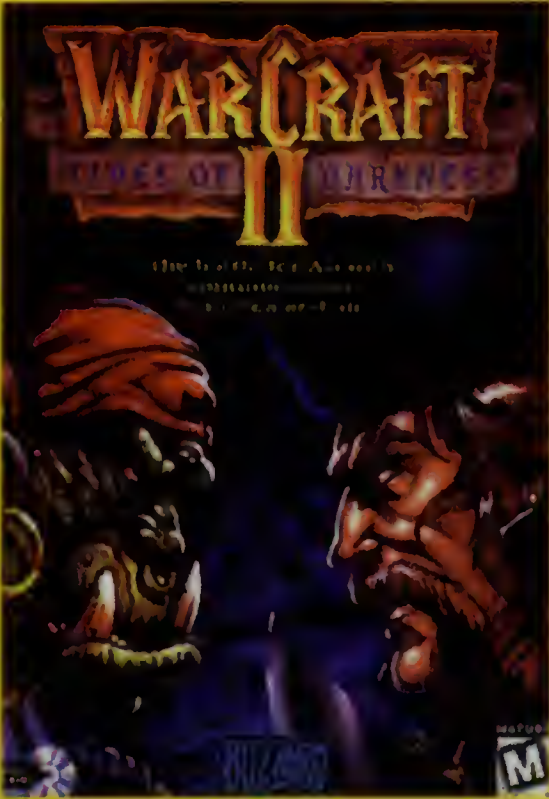
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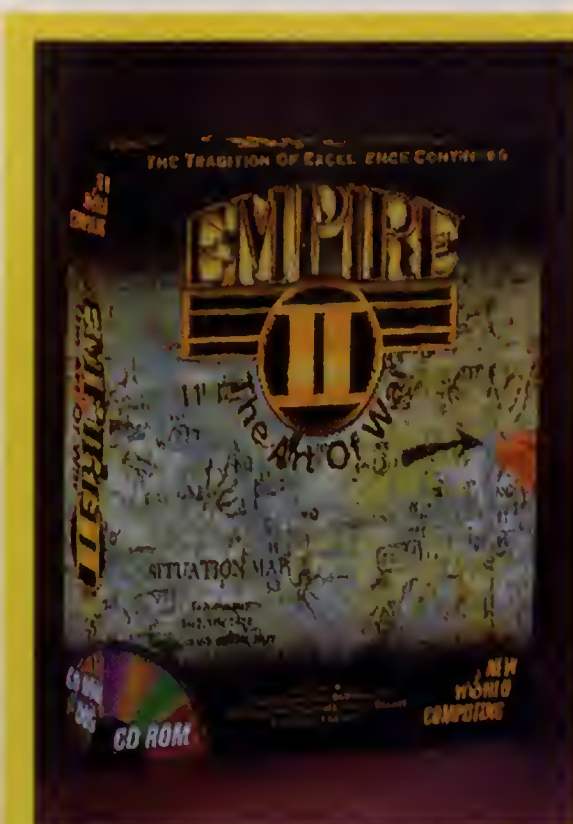
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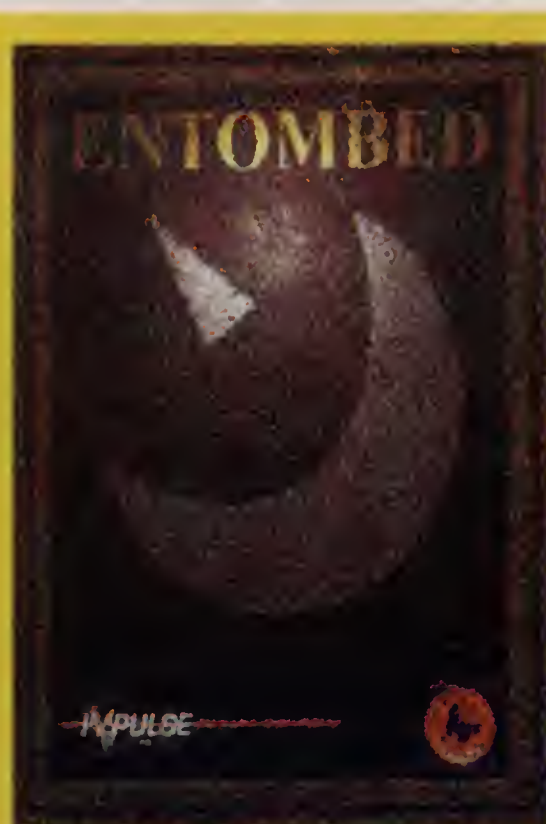
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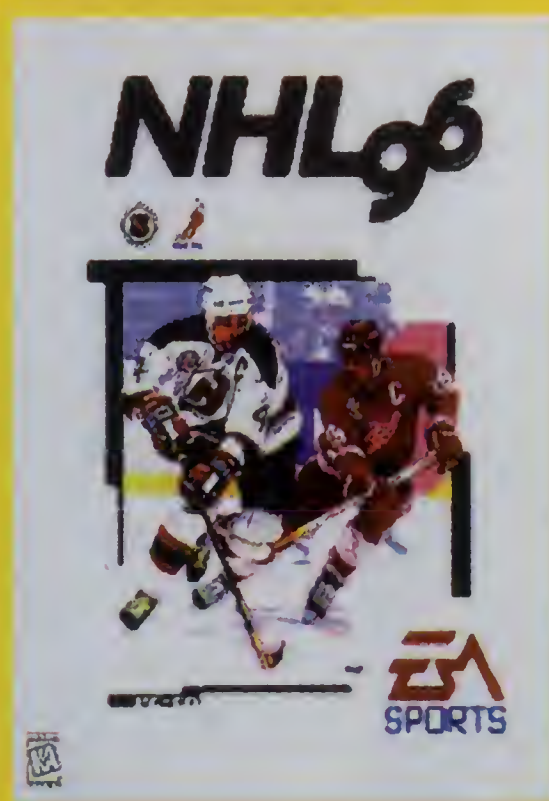
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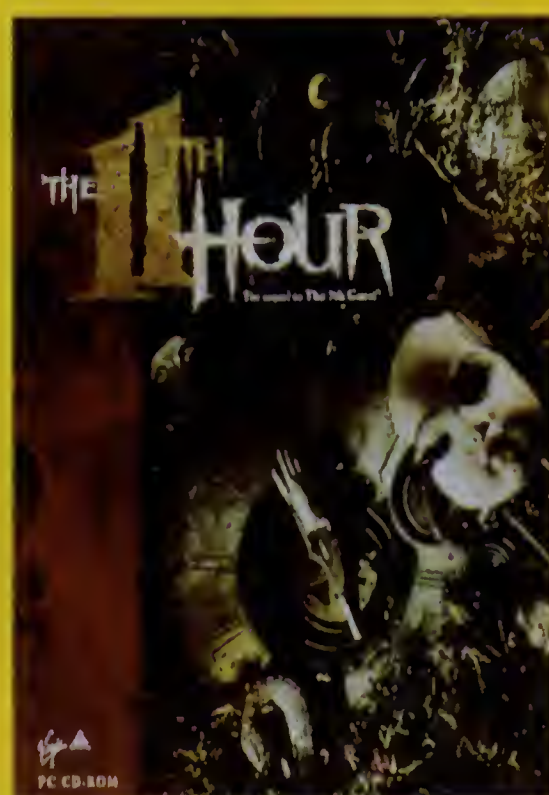
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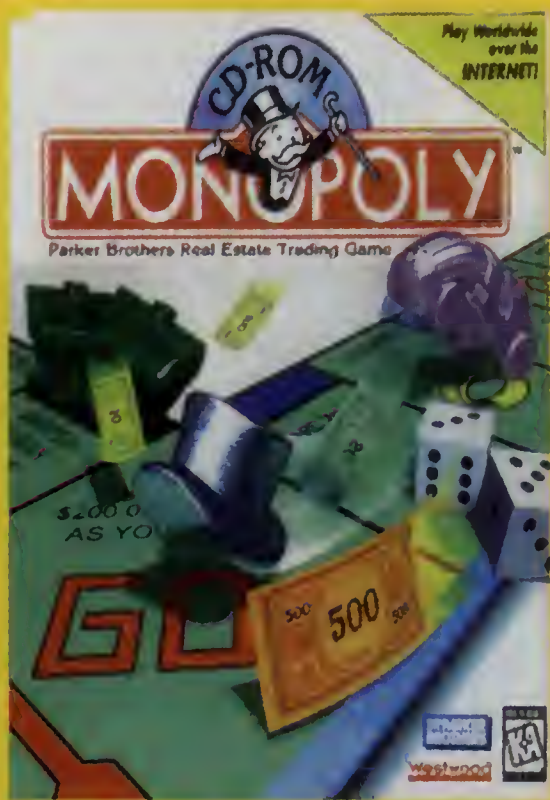
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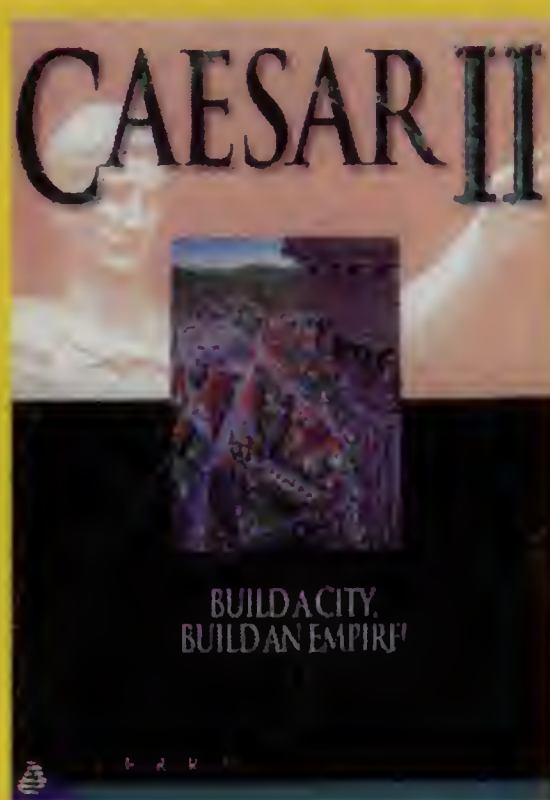
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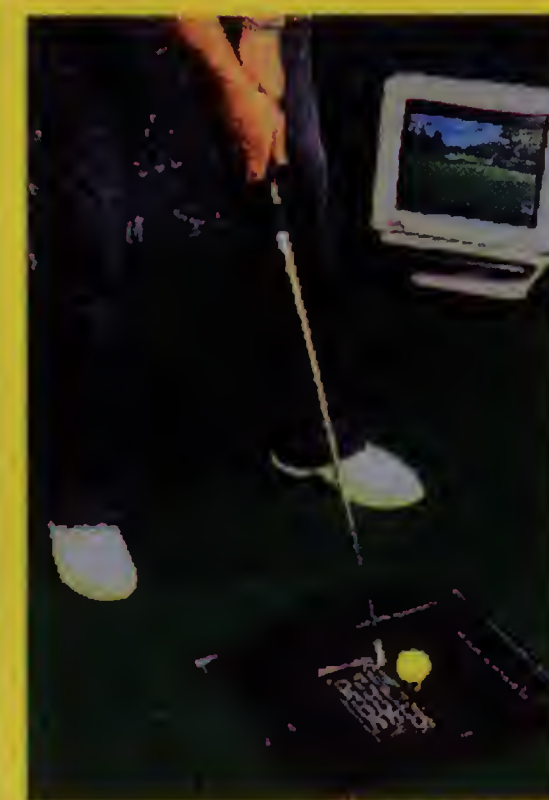
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Public Service Announcement

Hi guys,

I just wanted to write and thank you for your excellent review of **Full Throttle**. I say excellent here because your review helped me to decide to *not* buy **FT**, at least, not yet (I'll probably buy it when it comes out in an archive, or on sale). I would like to say a couple of things in defense of LucasArts, though: I've been buying their games since the bad ol' 8-bit days — remember **Rescue on Fractalus**? It was the **Terminal Velocity** of the Atari, and still an excellent game. The thing that made those games great was that they were new and unconventional. LA's willingness to experiment (and market those experiments, like **Loom** and **Fate of Atlantis**) is what makes their games the best ones around. Also, no one is going to accuse them of resting on their laurels. As much as I like **The Secret of Monkey Island** and **MI2**, I'm glad we haven't seen a constant stream of **MI** sequels, unlike some other adventure game companies I could mention.

Thanks again,

Jeff Hildebrand, Software Engineer/Iris Systems
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Dear Jeff,

Thanks for the praise!

We try to tell it like it is; we're genuinely enthusiastic about some games, and genuinely appalled at others. Check out this issue to see the range that way, too. Agreed about LucasArts, though in everyone else's defense it's probably a lot harder to be original now than it was to start off with. Doesn't mean people shouldn't try, though. Expectations have to have gotten shaken up over the past year or two just because of the major shifts in technology, with everything from 3D to FMV to better sound support (including stereo and Q-Sound and the rest); now would be a good time for designers to experiment a little, before some defining release or two hardens everyone's expectations again and makes it difficult to sell anything different, eh? —ed.

Retro Gamer

Dear Splus,

Well, I've given up on my techno-sneakers, and gone canvas; and while I haven't exactly given up on PC gaming yet, I *did* head out and buy a Sega Game Gear the other day, mainly 'cause it was cheap, it was in the supermarket, and they had a *load* of games going for like \$14-\$20 a pop.

What a revelation! Those games are fun! And I can lie back under the apple tree in my back yard on a bright, fall afternoon, switch the thing on, hit Start and dig into **Sonic 2** (an excellent game, by the way). For the first time in what seems like years, I'm really enjoying computer gaming again.

I've seen all the trash-ing and bashing that goes on in gaming forums (*Prodigy* and *America On-Line* are my haunts), and it sounds mainly like

spoiled little boys fighting over who can spend more. Everyone dumps on old "8-bit" technology, without the slightest inkling of understanding that the number of bits available might have *nothing* to do with the sheer fun-factor in gameplay.

So yeah, I'll probably upgrade to a P6 when it's time (yawn), and yeah, I'll probably upgrade to Windows 95 eventually (yawn), and sure, there are a bunch of interesting-looking PC titles on the way, and yep, the Sega Saturn and Sony Playstation are both technologically impressive, but pardon me for checking out for a little while; I'm having fun. Will continue to enjoy reading your coverage of the PC gaming industry, and maybe head out every now and then to buy a new PC game, maybe like six months after it's been released and all the bugs and compatibility problems and configuration issues have all been solved. But excuse me now — I need to get back to solving Gimmick Land, — see ya!

Perry Finkelstein
East Hampton, NY

Dear Perry,

You're not alone in your retro-gaming leanings, apparently it's all the craze in some quarters. Let's see, pretty soon people will be swallowing live goldfish; playing with hula-hoops; tossing frisbees (well, that's eternal, not really a fad); streaking; wearing loud ties and jackets with really wide lapels; men will be wearing polyester shirts opened to the fifth button with gold chain jewelry dangling on their hairy chests... HEEEEELL-LLPPP!! Whatever happened to that beautiful techno-future we were all promised during the earlier part of the twentieth century?! You know, silver skin-tight suits, everyone beautiful and serene, floating leisurely through traffic in

their clean, quiet hovercars, working 20 hours a week, no poverty, no war, no wretchedness... <sigh>... guess that was all just hype, too. Back to **Joust** — see ya. —ed.

They're all over the place

Mag,

What is it these days with the software release dates? I remember 2

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years ago MicroProse would stick out as the black sheep with **Task Force**. Maybe even *Origin* pushed the dates a little too hard. Not even mentioning **Mechwarrior**! Over all, though, a delay of a product was the exception.

That changed big time! Now you have to be happy if the game comes out in the announced quarter. Honestly I'm kind of tired getting lied at. At least that's how it feels

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sometimes! I know a program needs fine tuning, but I also know that if such a step has to be taken it is not just known the date before the game was due at my mail box!

So what's the scupe [sic]? Maybe you can ask some of the software producers for me, and for the rest of all fellow gamers.

Thanks,
Karsten Laqua
samson@dkunix.dkeep.com

Dear Karsten,
It's all because the marketing departments for all the game companies are getting huge, and all those people need something to do between actual game releases. Early advertising of games keeps them busy and out of the programmers' hair, while at the same time advertising a game a year before it gets anywhere near completion stresses out all the people working on the game, which helps keep them all in line and away from going off on some ambitious tangent guaranteed to sink the whole project outright. Or maybe everyone's cowering in terror of those eight people who haunt the world's online services, looking for new releases to spend the next three months of their lives shooting to pieces the moment they've shown up; maybe every time they say to themselves, "well, it's ready to ship!" they see yet another flame war over the historical inaccuracies of the artillery range for howitzers in *Game X* and they cringe, worrying that some bug or other will doom their own release to instant failure, due to the Eagle Eyes of these Dangerous Flamers. Or maybe it's because putting together full-motion video, 400 megabytes of hand-crafted artwork, an hour's worth of dynamic musical scoring,

the same 3D terrain graphics for 320x200, 640x480, 800x600 and 1024x768 graphics modes, structuring game design and AI, providing peripheral support for the Phoenix, the FLCs, the TQS, the CH Pro, pedals, virtual reality helmets, etc. and all the while watching the competition closely to see whether they've managed to pull off something likely to outdo such an expensive project, is a lot more work than designing a game in VGA spread across four 1.4MB floppies running a Sound Blaster and supporting the mouse and keyboard used to be. Whaddya think? —ed.

They're really all over the place

Dear Editor,

As a 30 year old lawyer (don't say it!) it's not often that I send fan mail. In this case, however, I would like to say thanks very much to you and your colleagues at SP for producing a high quality gaming magazine.

My interest in computer games only goes back four years and as a latecomer I was disappointed by the (largely) juvenile focus of many so called serious magazines. Your magazine has reassured me that there are "mature" gamers (which has nothing to do with age) out there, and that some publishers of both games and magazines are willing to cater to this more demanding audience.

So please maintain both your standards and your crusading attitude towards the industry and its current infatuation with glitz rather than substance. In closing might I note that my particular interest is Sports sims — the expansion of your Sportswire feature would be welcomed by this reader (*The Hangar* and *On War* are also keenly read each month).

Good luck with future deadlines!

Colin Gray
Somewhere in New Zealand

Dear Colin,
We hope we can continue to provide the kind of focus you enjoy — while our traditional strengths derive from coverage of simulations and strategy games, we also feel that any type of game, done carefully, is as deserving of professional, intelligent discussion and understanding as any other. Expect us to do as good a job thinking about games some people consider "brainless" as we do about games most people assume are for the "mature" gamer. Personally, I think it's too bad there's no-one around yet discussing the console systems systematically and with the same kind of depth of understanding people expect in the coverage of PC games. It'll happen, sooner or later, especially with the new hardware on the horizon — at least I hope so. —ed.

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